

THE FATAL  
CONSEQUENCES  
OF THE  
*Unscriptural Doctrine*  
OF  
PREDESTINATION  
AND  
REPROBATION;

With  
A *Caution* against it.  
Written in *High-Dutch* by M. K. and translated  
by Desire.

GERMANTOWN,

Printed and Sold by *Christopher Sower*, 1753.

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# The Fatal Consequences, &c.

AS formerly, so now a Days, and in this Country too, the perverse *Scribes*, Mark 12:24, and blind Leaders, Matth. 15:14. do trouble and confound many Men, who with the Doctrine of *Calvin, Beza* and *Fiscator* are so highly taken, that some die away in the greatest Despair, by adhering to such Doctrine, which teacheth, that God, by the eternal Election in Grace and Wrath, not regarding the Fall of *Adam*, or that he could or would fall in Time; hath absolutely in *Adam* created (without respecting his future Fall) some to eternal Life, and others to eternal Death, because he, as an absolute or arbitrary Lord, could deal with his Creatures according to his Pleasure, as the said *Calvin, Beza &c.* did set forth, *lib 3, Instit. Cap. 21, p. m. 589. alfo cap. 24. §. 12. p. 624. Item Beza auct. ad Rom. 9. Piscator in lib. de Gratia Dei, viz. We call Predestination the eternal Decree of God, whereby he resolved by himself, how it should go with every Man: for they are created not all [or with] a like Condition; but to some is destined eternal Life, and to others eternal Damnation &c.* Whereto the blind Leader and perverse Scribes further add, that many little **Babes** of a Span long are under Damnation. But thou, that art in the Mouth of the false Shepherds, Ezek. 34:10, and art confused and full of Mistrust of the Grace of God, who has said that he is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works, Ps. 145:9. Rom. 11:32, and retaineth not his Anger for ever, Micha 7:18, pray, let the blind Leaders alone, as the Lord Jesus commandeth, Matth. 15:14, and turn thyself to him, the Saviour and Salvation of all Men, Isa 49: 6—13 then thou wilt be happy indeed Isa. 45:22, like *Mary*, Luke 7:48, Ch. 10:39, *John* 11:2, and the prodigal Son, Luke 15, and the penitent Thief on the Cross, Luke 23:43. But if thou art a Murderer as *Cain* had been, Gen. 4, then do as God would have him to do, Do well, and leave off Sin; or art thou an Adulteress as the Woman mentioned *John*. 8. then act as the Lord Jesus desired her to do, viz. sin no more, In short, be good and sin no more henceforth, and then will God no more damn thee than he did *Cain* or the Adulteress. But if thou dost not leave off sinning, then thou condemneth thyself, for as God doth not tempt any Man to Evil, so he damneth nobody, but the Man's own Evil enticing and alluring bringeth forth to him Sin and Damnation, James 1:13-15, and when thou art upon the Point of Life and Death, and there is no Time more for thee to do Good instead of Evil, and thy Conscience convinced and accuseth thee, that thou hast done only evil Things and no Good, then do thou count thyself worthy and guilty of Damnation, and commit thyself unto God, and nor unto the Devil, and do not believe, that God is so cruel as the Teachers of Predestination and eternal Damnation do describe him, when they teach, that he hath damned the most Part of Men from Eternity, and will never have Mercy upon them again; yea, they declare, that God, to shew and to manifest his absolute Sovereignty [as it follows from the above mentioned Doctrine of Predestination] doth create, prepare and ordain an infinite Number of Men to everlasting Damnation, and so by this Means make God much worse than the Devil (for the latter is not able to do it) and thus they do nothing else, as far as it is in their Power, but dishearten Men, and drive them away from God, to remain with the Devil: Now, whosoever doeth so, serveth the Devil, and not God.

Therefore, O Man, when thou art discouraged, and ready to doubt of the Grace and Mercy of God, and art a great Sinner, lying upon thy Death-bed, let not the

transformed Ministers of Righteousness and Servants of Satan, 2Cor. 11:15, disturb thee through their Preachings and Writings, but however do thou believe, that if God must call thee down for thy Wickedness into Hell, that yet he will bring thee out of it again, 1 Sam. 2:6. *[according to Luthers Translation]* and that *he created thee not unto everlasting Damnation, but to eternal Life*, Wifd. 2:23, Genes. 1:27, and that he is only to this End manifested in Christ Jesus, viz. *to seek and to save that which is lost*, Luke 19:10, and *to destroy the Works of the Devil*, 1 John 3 : 8, and that he, being omnipotent, will find those which he seeketh for, and save them, and certainly will destroy the Works of the Devil: And do not believe that God, *[which is Love*, John 4: 8, *and retaineth not his Anger forever*, Micha 7:18. Ps. 103:9] is such a sovereign Lord as a tyrannical Monarch, who out of Affection loves some Men and hates others; or doth make some, for his Ambition's sake, to prosper exceedingly and others to be eternally miserable; but do thou believe, that God is a sovereign Lord in the following manner, That he is God and none else, and that unto him every Knee shall bow, and every Tongue shall swear, Isa. 45:22. Philipp. 2:10, 11, and through his omnipotent Wisdom and Love he is excellent in working, Isa. 28, 29, without desiring to annihilate his Creatures: So that *every Creature which is in Heaven and on the Earth, and under the Earth, and such as are in the Sea, will all at last say, Blessing, and Honour and Glory, and Power be unto him for ever and ever*, Revel. 5:13. And that God, for to shew his absolute Sovereignty, has no need to create and ordain some Creatures to an infinite, everlasting Damnation, like a tyrannical Monarch; for, all and every Creature may not deprive him of his absolute Dominion, as they may do an earthly Monarch; but the Creatures, *through their raging against God*, deprive themselves of their own Dominion, Psalm 2, Ezek. 32, and condemn themselves. Therefore do not believe it at all, that God should condemn the Babes of a Span long, who, as we find, would not only spare Men that could not discern between their right Hand and their left, but also the Cattle, Jonah, 4:11, who will not afflict the Children of Men for ever, neither causeth he Grief unto them willingly, Lament. 3:31,32. But when he is constrained to afflict them for their Wickedness, he doeth it only to the End *that they may seek him, and pour out their Lamentations and earnest Prayers for Redemption* Isa. 26: 16. that he may have Compassion on them, as on the prodigal Son, and deliver them out of all Troubles, or Torments, in Time and Eternity, so as he loves to do. Isa. 24: 21, 22. Hosea 13:14. *Yea, God will disannul their Covenant with Death, and their Agreement with Hell shall not stand*, Isa. 28:17, 18,19, and he will swallow up Death in Victory, Isa. 25:7, 8, *and make every Thing new*, Rev. 21:5. How then could it be, that he should have made and ordained innumerable Men to eternal Death and Damnation? The Places of Scripture which seem to be contrary to those above-cited, **will by no** means disannul or make them void, but will only demonstrate the Thing as it is in itself: When, for Instance, Isa. 66:24, and Mark 9: 44, it is written, that their Worm shall not die, and their Fire shall not be quenched, it is very true, as in Rev. 20, vs. 15, stands, *the gnawing Worm of their bad Conscience dieth not*, and their tormenting Fire is not quenched, as it happens now and then in this Time by wicked Men, that they do suppress the Accusations of their Consciences by various Diversions and Sports, and will not learn to regard the Word by Tribulations, but in the eternal Fire the Wicked is restrained from all Opportunities to get rid of these gnawing Worms and tormenting Fire, and this Worm liveth always, and this Fire burneth continually, that these lasting Punishments may teach them to regard the Word: *Yet so as by the Fire to be saved* 1Cor. 3:15. And when Matth. 25 : 46, it is said, that *the Wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishments, but the Righteous into Life*

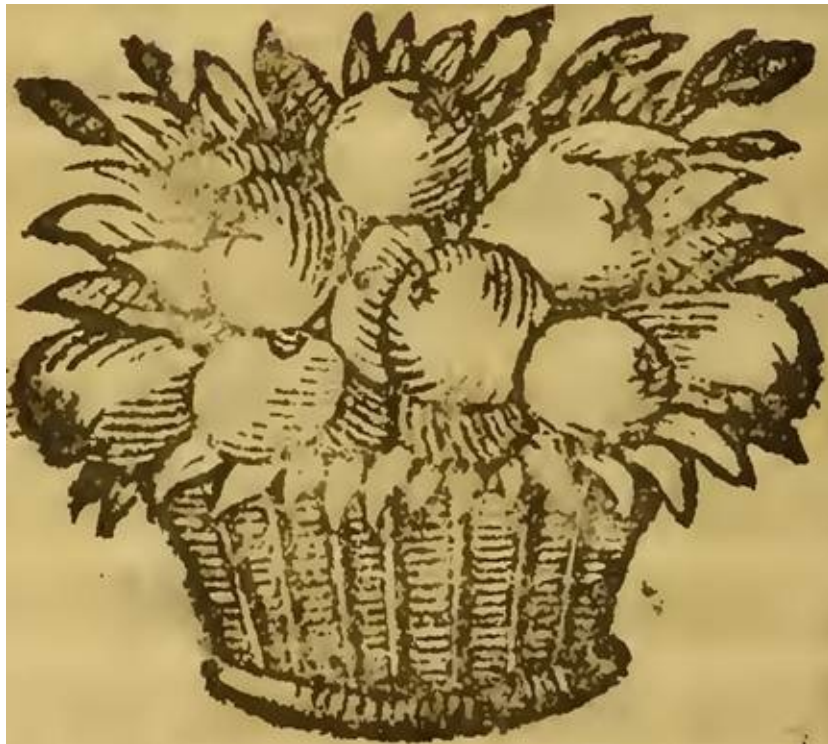
*eternal*, the Meaning is the same as the Expression is, because that after the abolishing of this temporary World, the Pains and Torments of the Wicked will be to Eternity such as they were here in this Time, and much greater, insomuch that the *Bed of Torture*, [which only will teach the Impious to regard the Word] is in the Eternity *shorter than that a Man can stretch himself on it, and the Covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it*, Isa. 28: 19, 20, but it is not to be supposed that the Pain is infinite like *the Life*; for *the Life is essential, and God himself*, John 5:20, and the Pain is an Accident, *and God no more made it than Death itself*, Wisdom 1:13, and therefore they cannot possibly remain as long as God is God, who is Life. Neither doth Rev. 24:11, prove, that there is an infinite Pain, but only the long Period wherein the Wicked shall *be shut up in Prison*, Isa. 24:22, till *they shall be visited*: For no Creature is able to bear such Torments eternally. And that God should give them Power or Assistance to suffer such eternal Pains, is not to be believed; for *he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men*, Lament. 3:33 and *he is good to all*, Ps. 145:9. And whereas it is written Rom. 8:28—38, concerning those that are called according to his Purpose, that the Justified, Glorified, *and Elect of God are foreknown and predestinated*; thou must not think, that such a highly illuminated Apostle as Paul was, has meant such a Predestination as is above mentioned, and as thou hearest from the Pulpits or readest in Books; no, no; believe me, never such a Predestination came into the Apostle's Thoughts, the perverse Scribes do only charge him falsely with it, which is easily to be discerned when thou dost mind attentively the Meaning of the Scripture, and givest more Credit to it than to thy blind Leaders; for so doing thou wilt find, that the Apostle there, Rom. 8:1, is speaking of them *which are in Christ Jesus, that no Condemnation is to them ; that they are* (v.17) *Children, Heirs of God and Joint-heirs with Christ, if so he that they suffer with him, that they may be also glorified together*; and v.18, the Apostle reckons the *Sufferings of this Time not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in them*, and extends v. 19 to 27, the Circumstances of the Sufferings further; and then he says, v. 28. *We know that all Things work together*, [viz. *all Sufferings and Weaknesses*] *for good to them that love God*, to them which are *the Called according to his Purpose*, which Purpose is, *through Suffering*, v. 35, 36, and *many Tribulations to come to the Glory*, v. 18, or *to enter into the Kingdom of God*, Acts 14:22. And the Apostle well knowing that a great many would not like to engage upon such Terms, and that they would dread the Sufferings of this present Time, and reckon the Glory which shall be revealed in the Lovers of God and Christ, not worthy of such Sufferings, and that they *would not be saved but by Fire*, 1Cor. 3:15, and God, foreknowing that but a few Men would love to *suffer with his beloved Son*, and to be exalted with him to the Glory, therefore saith the Apostle further Chap. 8:29. *For whom he* (God) *did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the Image of his Son*; and further v. 30 to 33, he calleth them *God's Elect*, and sheweth their Qualifications, v. 35 to 39. And his Meaning simply is, that because of their *very great Love unto God* and the only Saviour Jesus Christ they do evidence themselves to be elect of God. But the Apostle did never so much as think on such a *Predestination or Election of Wrath*, or Reprobation, as the blind Leaders would make Men believe. And as the Apostles Brethren according to the Flesh, viz. the Jews did count themselves unworthy of the Glory and Liberty of the Believers in Jesus Christ by their Unbelief and Enmity against him; so hath the Apostle *great Heaviness and Sorrow in his Heart*, Rom. 9: 2, and that also the Believers from among the Gentiles should not be high-minded [as the Jews] and boast that God had cast them [the Jews] away, and had only accepted and chosen the Gentiles, in the same



manner as the *Jews* did glory in Haughtiness to be the only peculiar and chosen People of God above all other Nations, he having, as they thought (Acts 10) rejected all others, therefore doth St. Paul demonstrate to the Gentiles, being *their Apostle*, as he had given them to understand Rom. 11:13, the Election of the *Jews* very plain, ver. 25. and acquainteth them Rom. Ch. 9: 10, 11, that there is with God no other Election than in Jesus Christ; Gal. 3:28, and that he, who is joined unto and loveth him, shall be blessed and elected, though he be Jew or Greek, and that he, who despiseth Christ Jesus, and is *not joined* unto, nor with him, shall be condemned, [though he be nominated a *few* or *Christian*] John 15:4,6, and that therefore no Man shall trust in a particular Election, as the *Jews* had done, and despise thereby the Choosing in Christ, but because Jesus Christ *has made an Atonement for all Men*, Col. 1:20, *through the Offering of his Body for Sin, which Sacrifice is efficacious forever*, Heb. 10:5-12. *God having thereby reconciled the World unto himself*, 2 Cor. 5: 19, and Jesus having *obtained eternal Redemption, and being able to save to the utmost*; Heb. 7:25. Ch. 19:12, and that consequently *it is a light Thing to God to rise up the Tribes of Jacob, and to restore the Preserved of Israel and all Things*. Isa. 49:6. Acts 3:21. Wherefore also the Apostle, Rom. 11:32, faith, *God hath concluded them all in Unbelief that he might have Mercy upon all*. Rom. 11:32. The Meaning of this is, That GOD hath concluded every Unbeliever, Jew, Gentile, &c. by Reason of their Unbelief and Disobedience, under the same Judgment, in order to convince them that they are Unbelievers and disobedient, and worthy of the Punishment of Unbelief, and that He may have Mercy on every one in his due Time, And the Apostle, who, in his Ecstasy, being exalted to the third Heaven, 2 Cor. 12, had very well learned the Oeconomical Government of God with his Creatures, never thought on such a Hardening, Rejection, and Preparation for Damnation, as the Teachers of Predestination pretend.

That thou, therefore, O Man, who countest thyself forlorn, mayest understand rightly the Meaning of that Text of Scripture, which the blind Leaders do hold for the Foundation of their System, viz, Rom. 9:11-33, *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated...* observe, that the Apostle grounds the Salvation of Men, and the Election of God, only upon Christ crucified, as is clearly to be seen in this and all his other Epistles; and that God doth choose none for his Children that are without Christ. Now, God foreknew very well, before Jacob and Esau were born, that Jacob would keep close to Christ, and *to the Seed of Promise*, Gen. 3:15. Chap. 22:18, and that he would believe in Christ; but that Esau would be a *Fornicator and profane Person*, Hebr. 12:16, and that Jacob would love that which God loves, but Esau would love that what God doth hate: therefore it is said, *Jacob have I loved*, &c. If Esau had loved that what Jacob did love, then would God have loved him as well as he did love Jacob; but *God (v 14.) is not unrighteous*, because he doth not love the Ungodly, and has not Mercy on him so long as he continueth in Wickedness and is not gracious to the Wicked, as long as he *believeth not on the only begotten Son of God*; John 3:16. and because a Man can in no wise help himself, (v. 16) but *it is of God* that sheweth Mercy: And *Pharaoh's Heart being so hardened that he would not know of any Lord above him, neither would hear his Voice*, God suffered him to be so as he desired to be, and therefore it is said, *the Lord hardened his Heart*. Exod. 9:12. that He, the true God might prove to those false Lords, and to the whole World, that he is greater than this supposed Lord upon Earth; *this manner* God has Mercy on whom he will, and hardeneth whom he will; and remaineth still righteous in all his Doings. But, saith the wicked Man, *Why doth he yet find fault?* for *who hath resisted his Will?* v. 19. Nay, but O man! even therefore finds he fault, because *thou wilt resist his Will, and lay*

*it to his Charge* and wilt not bow thyself under him, like the Clay under the Potter, and therefore (v. 21) he cannot make thee a Vessel unto Honour, and must needs make known his Power and shew his Wrath unto thee, as loth as he is to it, which he proveth by this, in that he beareth thee with the greatest Longsuffering, before he maketh of thee *[through this thy own fault]* to Damnation a Vessel fit for Wrath. And so, O Man, that lookest upon thyself as forlorn and fitted for the Wrath of God and eternal Damnation, thou mayest see that the Case is not so, and that the Apostle hath not meant it as the blind Leaders represent it: I pray, therefore, do not adhere to that perverse Generation, Matth. 25:33, which, according their corrupt Humour, can do nothing else but poison Men, as thou wilt find it on or within thyself, and in the holy Scripture, that they have misled and perverted the Jews and thee from Jesus Christ the Saviour and Salvation of all Men; trust thyself no longer to these false Prophets, Matth. 7:15, and *grievous Wolves*, Acts 20:29, but trust thyself unto Christ, who saith to thee, Matth. 11:28, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*; and believe certainly, that on every individual Soul, that turns to the Father like the prodigal Son, and humbleth itself before him, confessing and repenting of its Sin, and entreateth his Grace and Mercy in a right way, he will have Mercy and Compassion; that the Father (Ephes. 3:15) will pity such a Man, and be reconciled to him through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is come to seek and to save that which was lost, as Luke 19: 10. Ch. 15: 17-24, he doth clearly shew, And when his Disciples once asked him, *Who then could be saved?* Matth. 19:25, he answered, *with Men this is impossible, but with God all Things are possible*: Let this be thy Belief, and not that which the blind Guides do dictate unto thee, that thou mayest escape the Damnation of Hell, Matth. 25:33, and mayest not fall with them into the Ditch, Matth. 19: 24, nor mayest take thy Portion with them that have their part in the burning Lake, Rev. 21:8.





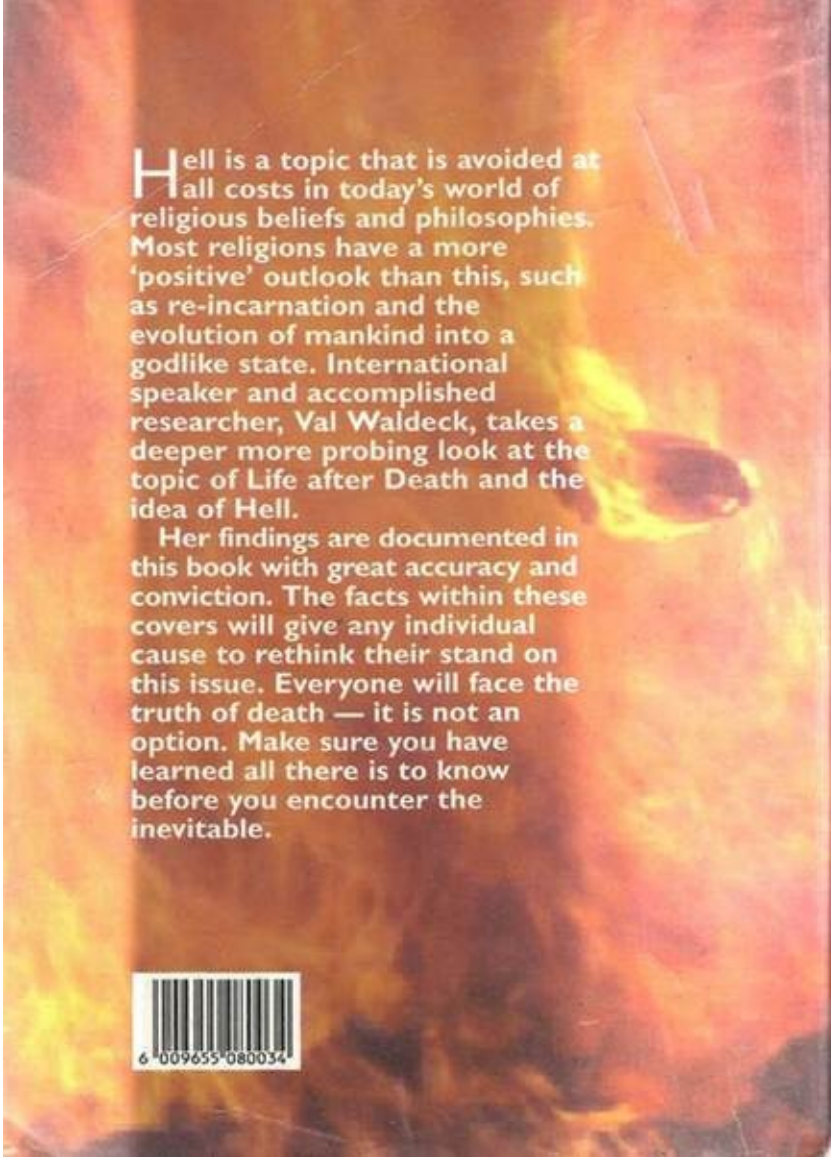


# HELL

**The Unspoken  
Truth**

Ancient writings  
reveal the truth  
about life after  
death

Val Waldeck



Hell is a topic that is avoided at all costs in today's world of religious beliefs and philosophies. Most religions have a more 'positive' outlook than this, such as re-incarnation and the evolution of mankind into a godlike state. International speaker and accomplished researcher, Val Waldeck, takes a deeper more probing look at the topic of Life after Death and the idea of Hell.

Her findings are documented in this book with great accuracy and conviction. The facts within these covers will give any individual cause to rethink their stand on this issue. Everyone will face the truth of death — it is not an option. Make sure you have learned all there is to know before you encounter the inevitable.



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Dedicated to all who share the glorious Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with a world lost in sin, without hope in this world or the next.

*"... As it is written:*

*"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace,  
Who bring glad tidings of good things!"*

*(Romans 10:15 quoting Isaiah. 52:7)*

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## **Foreword**

Did you ever want straight answers to one of life's most perplexing questions? Here they are, informing the reader who may be anxious about what lies on the other side of death.

"Every person over 50 thinks about death at least once a week", was a statement made recently by a leading psychiatrist. The one great reality that faces every human being is that we are going to die. We all want the assurance that "things will be ok".

Val gives us sound biblical exposition, pointing out that nothing is ever ok outside of Jesus. He, and He alone, is the Way that leads to eternal life. Charles Spurgeon wrote: "You may knock at a 1000 doors, you may cry and pray and groan and agonise and sweat, even great drops of blood, but there is only one door to heaven, and that door is faith in Jesus Christ. If you do not enter by that door, God himself will not open another". He is the only Door.

Reading Val's book has convinced me that I must make sure that when the time comes to die, that that is the only thing I have to do. Read it and tremble — believe and rejoice.

Charles Gordon

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Christian Leadership Training

Durban, South Africa

January 2001

## **HELL, The Unspoken Truth**

"The fact of hell is a grim reality which is not often mentioned today. In our present world it sounds harsh, weird and judgemental. Not everybody will agree with everything the author says but she raises a matter that must be considered by all."

**Bishop Frank Retief,**

St. James' Church, Cape Town, South Africa

"This is an absolutely vital truth because all roads do not lead to heaven. Jesus spoke more about hell than heaven and if there is no hell, then the Bible is a lie. People have to be warned that there is always a price to pay for sin. The wages of sin is death — and death is hell. Those who go to hell will burn forever. I believe that nobody deserves to hear the gospel twice until the world has heard it once and I pray that this book will cause many to think again."

**Angus Buchan**

Evangelist, Greytown, South Africa

"This 21st Century generation of children and youth - the millennial generation — will be a very religious generation. They will serve "God" — but the question is "which God!" They will create their own form of religion, the tragedy being that it won't be according to the Bible. This is the reason why a book like this about hell is so important! The next generation needs to know the truth

**Shane Cooke**

Cornerstone Creations Trust (Children's Ministry Leadership Training)

Pastor, Mountain View Family Church.

Durban, South Africa



## **Preface**

Writing a book on Hell has been a most challenging experience for me. Since my conversion to Christ, I have had a strong sense of the reality of Heaven and Hell and the importance of eternal issues.

Researching this Biblical topic has served to deepen that conviction. It has also put into my heart a new sense of the vital importance of people becoming aware of eternal realities.

I can no longer simply view people as “going to heaven or to hell”. The horror of separation from God for all eternity in an atmosphere that is worse than our most frightening nightmares, motivates me to share the Good News of the Gospel as never before.

The days of talking to people, praying with them and sharing a few comforting words, with a gentle Gospel challenge, are over. It has become imperative for me to make sure people who seek spiritual counsel from me understand the importance of being “born again” as their first priority.

Hell is not just a topic of academic interest. It is a reality facing every individual who leaves this world without genuine faith in Christ, the only Saviour of the world.

My heart’s desire is that this book will shake Christians out of their spiritual lethargy and awaken sinners to repentance and true faith in Christ Jesus.

**Val Waldeck**

Durban, South Africa January 2001

## **Introduction**

The story of Lazarus and the Rich Man was told by Jesus Christ close on two thousand years ago and its impact is still as powerful today as it was then.

The awful reality of Hell and the contrasting glory of Heaven gripped the hearts of those early hearers. The Lord was emphatic — there is a Hell to shun and a Heaven to gain.

Dr. Luke, a physician and close follower of the Lord listened carefully with interest and recorded it in his account of the life and ministry of Christ. The Gospel of Luke in the New Testament tells us the story.

Many believe this is just a parable, like so many others shared by Christ. Some have called it a myth or legend — a fable with a moral.

Others, however, believe that these are not imaginary characters. Specific people are called by name and precise detail is shared about their lives. I too believe this is a story about real people and their destiny.

“There was a certain rich man”, said Jesus — a particular individual, although he is not named. Abraham, an historical character, is clearly identified.

Lazarus, the beggar, is also called by name. Perhaps many of those listening had seen him sitting at the rich man’s gate and could easily identify him. Very possibly those listening that day knew exactly who Jesus was referring to.

This is the story of a wealthy, prosperous man who had everything this world could offer. By contrast, Lazarus, the beggar, had little of this world’s goods and very little sympathy from the rich man. Though they lived in the same town, their eternal destinies were far removed from one another. One man went to Heaven and the other went to Hell. Jesus was very clear about that.

Hell, the Unspoken Truth focuses on the rich man and his experience of an eternity separated from God. There were a number of things this man discovered about Hell and Jesus shares them with us in this story.

Is Hell a real place? Do people really go there? Let’s listen to the testimony of a man who has been there for at least two thousand or more years — and mourn with him as we realise that there is no escape. What he is suffering now is just a foretaste of the final Hell to be experienced after the Great White Throne Judgment — an awesome and

mind- boggling concept.

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## **THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS**

Luke 16:19-31 (KJV) *"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth*

Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. 27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment 29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. "

## **Chapter 1: THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS**

*“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”*

***Luke 16:19-23 (KJV)***

That was the last thing the rich man expected. In common with the vast majority of people who have lived on this earth, he never for one moment imagined that he would open his eyes in hell.

Sometimes referred to as “Dives” (Latin for “a man of wealth”), he thought that the riches of Heaven would far surpass the riches he had enjoyed while on earth. A man of his social standing and prosperity was surely destined for greater things in the life to come.

Dives had led a wonderfully prosperous life. He had a beautiful home set in the upper-class area of town. His family enjoyed every good thing life had to offer. They wanted for nothing.

His wardrobe was to be envied. The merchants loved it when he went shopping. The Bible says he wore only the best. Purple and fine linen were worn by most folk of his day for special occasions, but this was his common dress. “Yes”, he would say, “God has been good to me. I am truly blessed”.

As far as Dives was concerned, his material blessings were sure evidence that it was God who was blessing him. Everything was going his way. Poverty is a curse and the sign of God’s judgment. Surely everybody knew that!

An Old Testament writer expressed his dilemma with that very philosophy in Psalm 73. He was really puzzled by the fact that the rich are often so arrogant and ungodly, yet they prosper in every way.

“I envied the arrogant”, he wrote, “when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves

with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits. They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression.” (Psalm 73:3-8 NIV).

These very same people, he continues, “lay claim to heaven” with their mouths, (v.9) They believe they are going to Heaven, even though their lifestyles speak of arrogance, pride and sin.

If that is true, the writer concludes, then “in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence” (v. 12).

His dilemma was solved the day he saw things from God’s perspective. “When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me ‘till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny” (v. 17).

He could well have been describing the rich man’s demise! “Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors!” (v. 18,19).

One moment .. enjoying peace and prosperity ... the next on a slippery slope into hell.

It was not money that kept the rich man out of Heaven – but a lack of relationship with the Living God. Money can buy a lot of things, but it cannot buy spiritual prosperity. That comes only from genuine faith and trust in the Lord.

Dives was obviously a well-known businessman and someone of note in the community. No one would have dreamed for one moment that a man like this could possibly go to hell. Jesus must be joking. His hearers turned their thoughts to the people of their town. They all knew Lazarus. Surely he wasn’t talking about the rich man who had died recently – that pillar of society whom everyone praised. Perhaps He was and perhaps He wasn’t. Jesus never identified him, but the truths He expounded struck terror into the hearts of his hearers.

From the account it would seem that Dives was a Jew. He was no doubt very well known at the local Synagogue and gave his share of money for the upkeep of the poor as all good religious Jews were expected to do. He had done his bit for humanity - surely God would be in his debt forever. If there was indeed a Heaven to gain, he had earned his place there.

Strangely enough, the “poor” in his estimation did not include that wretched beggar sitting at his gate day after day. How he wished he

would go away. Get a job or something. Why did he have to sit right there at his gate? If indeed there were a Hell to shun that poor fellow would make a worthy resident. The earth would be well rid of him.

Dives could not bear to look at him. Sometimes the village dogs would surround him and lick those awful sores. He felt like opening the gates and letting his own dogs out. Trouble was that Lazarus was also a Jew and that would not have looked good in the eyes of the townspeople. So he just looked the other way when he went out of the gate and pretended not to see him. What else could he do?

Lazarus often pleaded for some bread or water. He watched silently as the servants unpacked the provisions for the rich man's table. This was a family that ate well. Every day they "fared sumptuously". Food and wine were delivered in abundance. Bread and meat and vegetables — he had never seen so much food.

How the beggar longed for even the crumbs, which fell from the rich man's, table. He watched the rubbish being carted away. Rubbish to the rich man's household, but gold to him ... if only he had the physical strength and energy to rummage in those garbage bags.

There was one thing that Lazarus did have — genuine faith in God. The name "Lazarus" means "God my help" and that was his testimony.

This man loved the Lord and he spent hours praying as he sat outside that gate. No one talked to him. Everybody ignored him, but he had a lifeline that was linked to the Throne of Heaven. And that was all he needed.

The scriptures tell us that the rich man died and "was buried". No doubt, it was a great funeral. People came from miles around to pay their respects and the wails of the mourners could be heard for hours. This was a great loss to the community of an important citizen with a great social standing. Heaven would surely be so much the richer for his passing.

No one even noticed the passing away of the beggar. One day a cart came by, picked up his body, and dumped him in a pauper's grave. He was of no consequence to the community. Just a pain and a source of irritation. No one cared for him in his life, and no one cared about his death. In fact, most people were glad he was no longer around, especially the family of the rich man. At least they would no longer have to pretend not to see him.

No one cared — but Heaven! We are simply told that the rich man was buried, his death of little consequence in spiritual terms. Lazarus,



on the other hand, was carried by the angels into “Abraham’s bosom”, a term used by the Jews to describe the blessedness of an eternity in the Presence of God.

The rich man had heard the Rabbis teaching on this concept many times and imagined that this would be his destiny. How wrong he was.

The last time we read about Lazarus, the beggar, he is seen enjoying the privileges of a guest of honour in Heaven in the very Presence of the One he loved.

Dives, on the other hand, opened his eyes in hell. He had just made the most tragic discovery of his entire life — that death was a permanent gateway into Eternity and our choices here on earth determine our eternal destiny.

## **Chapter 2: DEATH, THE GATEWAY TO ETERNITY**

***“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”***

***Luke 16:22-23 (KJV)***

Lazarus found himself in Heaven, the place referred to in Rabbinic literature as “Abraham’s bosom”. For him, the discovery that physical death was the gateway to eternity was wonderful. It was the fulfilment of all his desires and his highest hopes. He was happy beyond his wildest dreams.

The rich man found himself in a situation more horrible than he could ever have imagined.

He had closed his eyes in death .. and opened them in hell.

To be “in Abraham’s bosom” is an ancient term that refers to the custom of reclining on couches at table, an arrangement that brought the head of one person almost into the bosom or chest of the one who sat or reclined above him.

The Gospel of John describes how the disciples of Jesus followed this custom at the “Last Supper”. They wanted to know whom Jesus was referring to when He said someone would shortly betray Him. A disciple, believed to be the Apostle John himself, was reclining on a couch with his head close to the chest of Jesus. This brought him into a place of very close communication with the Lord, making him the obvious choice to ask the question on behalf of the other disciples.

“One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means. Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.” (John 13:23-26 NIV).

“Abraham’s Bosom” speaks of enjoying happiness and eternal rest from the toils of life in intimate fellowship with the Lord. It is a picture of the Great Banquet in Paradise where, reclining in typology at table, leaning on Abraham’s bosom, Lazarus was enjoying the privileges of a guest of honour. What a wonderful moment that would last throughout

eternity.

"Hell", on the other hand refers to the place of the unrighteous dead. The New Testament was originally written in Greek and a very specific word is used to describe the place the Rich Man found himself in. That Greek word used in Luke 16 is "Hades", translated "hell" in the King James Version of the Bible.

"Hades" refers to the "place of departed spirits", or "the abode of the dead". The Old Testament was written in Hebrew (with some parts in Aramaic) and uses the Hebrew word "Sheol" to denote the same place.

"Sheol/Hades", the abode of the dead, is not the final destination of the eternally damned. The Greek word used to describe the final Hell is "Gehenna" and refers to Hell proper, which is only opened after the Great White Throne Judgment when satan himself is judged.

At that time satan and his followers will be cast into hell.. "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:'" (Matthew 25:41)

This word "Gehenna" spoke volumes in Bible Days and the Lord often used it as a word- picture or symbol to describe the horrors of Hell.

Gehenna was the name used to identify a valley on the southern side of the city of Jerusalem in Israel. Known as the Valley of Hinnom or Tophet, it was used by worshippers of the false God Molech as a centre of idolatrous worship. Fires burned there continually as they sacrificed their children, burning them as an offerings to their deity.

The prophet Jeremiah refers to it. "And they built the high places of Baal which are in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I did not command them, nor did it come into My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin." (Jeremiah 32:35).

Two kings of Judah are particularly noted in the scriptures for following these heathen practices in the Valley of Hinnom or Gehenna - King Ahaz (2 Chron. 23:3) and King Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:6).

King Josiah later destroyed the place. "And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech." (2 Kings 23:10).

From then onwards the valley was used for the destruction of garbage and refuse and its fires were kept burning continually. It was a very appropriate example to use when describing the fiery place of

eternal punishment.

The Rich Man had often made use of this place to dump his garbage. He had watched the glowing fires, with their flames shooting into the night sky. He had smelled the burning sulphur and, perhaps, even shuddered at the thought of a place of punishment for sinners that could be anything like this. Of course, he did not see himself as a sinner and it was of academic interest to him, soon forgotten as he pursued his business interests in the city.

There has been confusion in the minds of some because the translators of the Authorised King James Version of the Bible sometimes also translate “Sheol/Hades” as “hell”. Newer versions of the Bible have tried to make the distinction clearer when translating “hades” and “gehenna”.

Sheol or Hades refers to the place where lost souls await the Judgment, prior to the opening of Gehenna. One might call it “Hell’s Holding Cell”. This is where Dives found himself.

The rich man was devastated. How was it possible that he should end up in hell? He had never given hell much thought, much less considered spending eternity in this Godforsaken place.

Surely it was a bad dream - a nightmare from which he would soon awaken. Most people he had talked to on earth had all sorts of theories about death and the life hereafter. How could they have been so wrong? What a fool he was not to have given it more serious thought. This place was very real and it was not going to go away. It was just the beginning of much worse to come - a foretaste of hell (gehenna) itself.

There are many theories about hell and the hereafter in spite of the clear teaching of the Bible on the subject. Everyone has an opinion. The rich man was no exception and he is only one of millions who found to their eternal loss that Jesus knew what He was talking about.

A serious study of the scriptures leaves no doubt that Jesus was convinced of the reality of hell. Bertrand Russell acknowledges that. “There is one very serious defect to my mind in Christ’s moral character”, he wrote, “and that is that He believed in hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is really profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment”.

In other words, he is saying that his opinion and moral righteousness are far superior to that of Jesus Christ. Is he right? Was Christ deceiving his hearers with this account of the rich man and Lazarus? Or was He Himself deceived? Jesus certainly believed in hell and talked more

about it than heaven.

Today professing disciples of Christ are not too keen to follow His example. Our modern- day churches don't talk much about the subject any more. In fact, some of the mainstream churches have discarded the traditional perception of hell as having become totally outdated.

"The old idea about hell has faded out and we pastors refuse to revive it", wrote one preacher. A professor associated with DePaul university, Chicago, Illinois, agrees: "Once we discovered we could create hell on earth it became silly to talk about it in a literal sense."

The Lord Jesus Christ, however, was so convinced of the awfulness of hell that He declared it was better to be disabled and go to heaven, than to cheerfully and in a state of great health open your eyes in hell.

Listen to Him preach: "If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire." (Matthew 18:8-9).

"Few educated people at the present day trouble their heads about everlasting damnation or fires of hell", says one writer. "The old doctrine of hell is dying. It was something for the Medieval Age."

The rich man wished then - and still wishes today - that hell was indeed just the "imaginings of inventors and medievalists". If only hell did not exist. If only it really was an outdated, medieval concept stirred by the feverish imaginations of religious freaks that wanted to scare people into their way of theological thinking. If only ...

The fact is, according to the Lord, hell is real - and physical death is the gateway to a permanent state of being.

Still, theories abound as men and women attempt to cheat death. During his lifetime the Rich Man, no doubt, had also vigorously debated a few theories of his own.

### **Chapter 3: THE DEATH CHEATERS**

*"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;*

*And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments – Luke 16:22-23  
(KJV)*

The late F.M. Esfandiary, born in 1930 to an Iranian diplomat in Belgium, was determined that death would never hold him. A teacher, author and corporate consultant, he changed his name to FM-2030 in the mid 1970's. He imagined a future of limitless energy and human immortality and gave lectures about people being made wholly from synthetic parts in the future. "I am a 21st-century person who was accidentally born into the 20th", he said.

FM-2030 arranged to have his body frozen at death with the hope of being revived in the future. When he died at age 69, his body was flown to Arizona for storage in a vat of liquid nitrogen. According to his plan, it should be thawed once doctors have a cure for pancreatic cancer, the cause of his demise.

At the present time his body is in a thermos tank at the Alcor Life Extension Foundation in Scottsdale, Arizona. The Foundation, in a news release, said they were hopeful that a scientific breakthrough will take place some time in the future, but noted that no frozen mammal has been successfully thawed to date.

Robert Nelson, a leading advocate of the frozen corpse theory, believes that the dream of man throughout history to attain eternal life has finally become a possibility with the dramatic growth of cryonics – the science of freezing human beings to a state of preservation that will allow scientists of the future to return them to life.

Man's best attempts to preserve his life will be of no avail in the end. "... it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27)

Those who refuse to accept God's offer of salvation –rejecting Christ and dying in a state of sin – will find that their decision will have eternal consequences. The sinner deludes himself that he shall escape hell. Jesus told those who rejected Him: "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come." (John 8:21)

Heaven will be forever shut to the sinner who chooses to trust in nothing, but a shadow.

Can man really cheat death by the deep freeze? The rich man may not have thought of such a thing in his day, but he certainly knows the answer to the question. He left his body on this earth ...and opened his eyes in hell (Hades). The spirit-man was very much alive. For him, death proved to be the gateway into an eternal state that nothing could change.

His soul was not in limbo, waiting for an opportunity to return to his body, even if it could have been preserved. No one had to tell him that this was the end of the line.

He knew by experience the answer to an age- old question once posed by Job concerning the whereabouts of the dead.

Some are so convinced that God does not exist, there is even a book on the market called “How to have a funeral without God”.

Tragically, even as a deceased’s friends are busy burying the scoffer in accordance with the instructions in the book, it is certain that he will have already experienced the truth of God’s Word. They may be burying him without reference to God, but the moment he left this world and opened his spiritual eyes in eternity, he knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that there is a God!

The fact that someone chooses not to believe what the Bible says about Hell or Heaven — or even about God — is actually totally irrelevant and changes nothing. He can as much choose to believe that the earth is a perfect square or that the moon is made of cheese.

Others try to escape eternal death with all kinds of theories that have no support from the inspired scriptures. Some of these theories include reincarnation, annihilation and universalism.

Jesus’ account of the Rich Man’s experience does not include any of these philosophies, but we need to look at them briefly because there are people who choose to accept these theories as truth, rather than the testimony of Jesus.

## **REINCARNATION**

This is the theory that death is the beginning of a new life and is propagated as an alternative to the “unpleasant “doctrine of hell.

Quincy Howe, Jnr., in his book “Reincarnation for the Christian”, says: “One of the most attractive aspects of reincarnation is that it removes entirely the possibility of damnation”.

If one life begins where another ends, there can be no such place as hell. Christ’s teaching, therefore, must be rejected and replaced by human reasoning.

That is exactly what many people have done.

A Gallop Poll in the U.S.A. in 1982 showed that some 23% of those polled believed in some form of reincarnation, many of them churchgoers.

As New Age teaching, based on eastern religious thinking, permeates

the church, this figure is rising and it is currently believed that about fifty percent of the world's population possibly subscribe to this view. It is certainly the predominant view in Asia.

Eastern religious thinkers, e.g. Hinduism and Buddhism have taught this philosophy for centuries. It is something relatively new to the Church of Jesus Christ and is totally foreign to Biblical doctrine.

Hindus believe in the "transmigration of the soul", i.e. that the soul keeps moving from one body to another. Through the so-called "Law of Karma" (which supposedly keeps track of one's life), an individual's soul is said to be incarnated into another body (born immediately or some time after death).

This process goes on for thousands, perhaps even millions of incarnations and, during this time, moral lessons are learned.

When sufficient merit has been earned to warrant liberation from the cycle of rebirths, the soul achieves salvation and becomes fully absorbed into the Absolute or Divine.

Orthodox Buddhists, on the other hand, do not believe in the transmigration of the soul. They believe that the soul of man is made up of

a bundle of characters or attributes. These represent the net effects of the outworking of the "Law of Karma", which gathers energy to give rise to a new individual. That sounds very complicated, but the bottom line is that they do not believe in hell the way Jesus taught it.

Their goal is to escape our present existence and eventually attain Nirvana - an eternity of bliss.

New Age thinking does not have the patience to wait that long. Their westernised form of eastern thinking teaches the hope of a new and better life in the future without the long cycle stretching over millions of years. For them the reincarnation process is achieved more quickly as people grow better and better with each reincarnation.

This is a good time to ask the question: Is man getting better? Or is our world regressing morally to deeper depths of depravity in spite of our increased intellectual growth? Does the evidence support the theory that man is evolving to a higher state of being?

Some point to "past life" experiences as evidence for the reality of reincarnation. The Sri Lankan newspapers, for example, often carry articles about people who feel they are able to recall their past lives. There are all sorts of stories and much of it has been found to be in the realm of pure speculation.



People have even subjected themselves to hypnotism in the attempt to delve into their so- called past lives. In their endeavours, some have even progressed into the future!

One thing, however, they all agree on is that the Bible teaching on death, hell and heaven is not true.

Dare we trust our eternal destinies to speculative human experiences, many of them contradicting one another?

Especially in view of the Biblical warning of the activity of supernatural demonic forces whose purpose and sole aim is to deceive people and confirm them in their unbelief. The Bible says that satan himself is able to "transform himself into an angel of light" (I Corinthians 11:14).

Reincarnation? The rich man wished it were true. If only he could leave that dreadful place and become a cockroach – or a cow. Anything would be better than this dark hellish place he found himself in.

Reincarnation to a better or even a worse state of being would be preferable by far.

## **ANNIHILATION**

An important and well-known Christian author and teacher recently shocked the Christian world when he declared himself to be in favour of the theory of annihilation.

This is the view that punishment of the lost is ultimate destruction, and not eternal suffering.

Together with other evangelical scholars such as Clark H. Pinnock, theology professor at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario, and Philip E. Hughes, a noted Anglican clergyman and author, they contend that those who ultimately reject God will simply be put out of existence in the "consuming fire of hell".

The rich man still wishes that were true. At least there will come an end to his suffering. But, in his heart of hearts, he knows that the words of Jesus are "yea and amen" and total truth.

Hell has no fire escape – and no end if the Bible is to be believed.

## **UNIVERSALISM**

Those who adhere to the theory of Universalism believe that everybody will finally enjoy an eternity of bliss, in one form or another. Even the devil will be saved, according to some. No one will be lost.

That was not the Rich Man's experience. Dives discovered, to his

eternal sorrow and loss, that our choices on earth are cemented in Eternity. The consequences are eternal because we are eternal beings, made in the image and likeness of God — never-dying souls.

Even if the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man is a parable, as some vehemently argue, the vital truth it teaches should make men think again.

Hell is real and people should not gamble their eternal destinies on the philosophies of men. "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment," (Hebrews 9:27)

Where are the dead? Either in Paradise or Hades, according to the Lord Jesus Christ and the inspired Word of God, the Bible.

There is absolutely no way to cheat death. Ask the Rich Man.

## **Chapter 4: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?**

*"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." – Luke 16:22-23 (KJV)*

Job asked a question many years ago that the rich man and Lazarus must have given thought to at some stage in their lives: "If a man dies, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14)

It is a question people have pondered throughout the ages. Job found his answer from the Lord Himself. Yes, there was life after death in the presence of the Redeemer of mankind, the Lord Jesus Christ and he looked forward to a new resurrection body in which he would see God and worship Him forevermore.

"For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God," (Job 19:25-26).

Job is one of the earliest books in the Bible and it is amazing that this man, who lived long before the Bible was ever penned, should have known about the resurrection of the body and life after death, truths proclaimed so clearly in the scriptures. It is evident that he was a man who knew His God.

This Old Testament saint had no fear of death and he was excited about spending eternity in the presence of the Lord. He had spent a lifetime preparing himself for that glorious moment.

Strangely, death is the most certain thing in the world, yet the least prepared for and the least spoken of. People tend to act as though they will live forever and Dives was no exception. Death was the last thing on his mind.

## **WHAT IS DEATH?**

Jesus taught that what we call "death" in this life is merely the separation of the physical body and the spirit/soul of man.

The spirit/soul goes to the place of the dead – Hades or Paradise – and the body returns to the elements to await the resurrection.

"Real death" in the Biblical sense means to be completely separated from the Author of Life, cut off for eternity from God. This final separation – called the "second death" in Revelation 20 – is eternal

death, a condition of separation from God forever.

Following the Great White Throne Judgment, the lost will find themselves in Hell (Gehenna), a condition the Bible describes as the second death.

**“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened.**

**And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11-15).**

The lake of fire (Gehenna) refers to eternal hell, the second death. “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8).

Those who die outside of Christ, just like the Rich Man, will find themselves in Hades, the place of departed spirits – the “holding cell” of Hell.

Hades is a foretaste of Gehenna, the introduction to the horrors that await the lost. It is in itself a terrible place.

Where are the righteous dead? Those who find the Lord and die physically, according to Jesus, will never experience that separation from God and thus will never experience “death” in the Biblical sense. That is why He continually referred to believers as simply “falling asleep”. Like Lazarus, the beggar, they close their eyes in this life and open them in His Presence.

The Lord tried to help His disciples understand this truth. One time a close friend, also named Lazarus, died. Jesus told the disciples that he was sleeping before He set off to raise him supernaturally from the dead.

“These things He said, and after that He said to them, Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up. Then His disciples said,

Lord, if he sleeps he will get well. However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, Lazarus is dead” (John 11:11-14).

Another time He told His disciples that death could not hold Him and, therefore, it would not hold them. “A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.” (John 14:19).

He was adamant about the fact that a true believer will never be separated from his God by physical death. “Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.” (John 8:51).

“And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:26).

That was the wonderful experience of Lazarus, the beggar.”... absent from the body and ... present with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:8).

But for Dives, it was a whole different ball game. He closed his eyes in this life and opened them in Hades — a place of separation from God and an introduction to the meaning of real “death” in the Biblical sense.

## **WHERE ARE THE DEAD?**

Throughout the ages, men and women who believed they knew better than God have proclaimed many theories concerning death. Some have said the deceased goes into a state of “soul-sleep”, to be awakened only on resurrection day.

Some, as we have seen, believe in annihilation — the total cessation of being once life on earth has come to an end. We have also talked about reincarnation, the view that we return in another form or as another person in an endless migration to perfection.

We have touched on universalism — the view that somehow the spirits of people are cleansed during a time of discipline and finally make their way to the Presence of God.

There are some who are convinced that death leads into a state of “oneness with the divine spirit”, a state of blissful impersonal being or Nirvana. And, of course, there are some who just look for an eternity of bliss in the “Happy Hunting Ground” above.

Most people who have seen someone die acknowledge that there is a separation of the spirit/soul and the body. One moment you are looking at a person and, even though they may be in a state of coma, you know they are “there”. The next a vacant expression clouds the eyes and you

know they are “gone”. The body lies there, vacant and uninhabited. There is no question about the fact that the person is dead.

Jesus spoke about this separation when He said it was possible to kill the body, but never the soul. “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell ” (Matthew 10:28).

## **WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BODIES OF THOSE WHO DIE?**

Scripture tells us that the body returns to the elements from which it is made. “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread ‘till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, And to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:19).

Whether someone’s body is drowned in the sea, eaten by fish, burned by fire or buried in the ground, it returns to it’s original elements until the day God calls these elements together again and forms our resurrection bodies.

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Daniel 12:2).

This refers to the resurrection of the body. The spirit/soul is conscious and waiting for this moment in Paradise (Abraham’s Bosom) or, alternatively, in Sheol/Hades. Those are the only two Biblical choices.

The body’s destiny is to be resurrected and reunited to the spirit/soul. That is why the body is so important and the scriptures emphasize the need to take care of it.

For the believer it will be a glorious experience.

**“For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down-when we die and leave these bodies-we will have a home in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long for the day when we will put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. For we will not be spirits without bodies, but we will put on new heavenly bodies.” (2 Corinthians 5:1-3 NLT).**

The believer’s resurrection body will be very special according to the Bible. 1 Corinthians 15:35-56 describes it for us.

**“35 But someone may ask, “How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?” 36 What a foolish question! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn’t grow into a plant unless it dies first. 37 And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a dry little seed of wheat or whatever it is you are planting. 38 Then God gives it a new body-just the kind he wants it to have. A different kind of plant grows from each kind of seed. 39 And just as there are different kinds of seeds and plants, so also there are different kinds of flesh-whether of humans, animals, birds, or fish. 40 There are bodies in the heavens, and there are bodies on earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the beauty of the earthly bodies. 41 The sun has one kind of glory, while the moon and stars each have another kind. And even the stars differ from each other in their beauty and brightness. 42 It is the same way for the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies, which die and decay, will be different when they are resurrected, for they will never die. 43 Our bodies now disappoint us, but when they are raised, they will be full of glory. They are weak now, but when they are raised, they will be full of power. 44 They are natural human bodies now, but when they are raised, they will be spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, so also there are spiritual bodies. 45 The Scriptures tell us, “The first man, Adam, became a living person.”? But the last Adam-that is, Christ-is a life-giving Spirit. 46 What came first was the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. 47 Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. 48 Every human being has an earthly body just like Adam’s, but our heavenly bodies will be just like Christ’s. 49 Just as we are now like Adam, the man of the earth, so we will someday be like Christ, the man from heaven. 50 What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These perishable bodies of ours are not able to live forever. 51 But let me tell you a wonderful secret God has revealed to us. Not all of us will die, but we will all be transformed. 52 It will happen in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died will be raised with transformed bodies. And then we who are living will be transformed so that we will never die. 53 For our perishable earthly bodies must be transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die.54 When**

this happens-when our perishable earthly bodies have been transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die-then at last the Scriptures will come true: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (I Corinthians 15:35,56 NLT).

So glorious will this new resurrection body be that, should we be able to see someone in that state now, we would be tempted to worship them!

For the unbeliever, it will be a sentence far worse than could ever be imagined or dreamed in their worst nightmares. Their bodies will also be raised from the elements and reunited to their spirits in time for them to stand before the Great White throne at the Last Judgment.

Totally “unglorious”, they will be locked into a state of eternal being, separated from God for all eternity.

## **WHAT HAPPENS TO THE SOUL/SPIRIT OF THOSE WHO DIE?**

Ask the Rich Man! Dives opened his eyes in Hades. His body had returned to the elements, destined to be raised again for the Great Day of judgment.

His spirit-man found himself in the “Place of Departed Spirits”, a literal place from which there was no escape –the holding cell of hell.

How he wished he had served the Lord while still on earth as he took note of Lazarus, happily enjoying the Presence of the Lord at the Great Banquet in Heaven.

Do believers go directly into the Presence of the Lord when they die? Or is there a waiting period? Purgatory or soul-sleep?

Ask Lazarus! He found out that the Word of God is true when it declares that absence from the body means to be present with the Lord, even while awaiting the resurrection of the body.

Jesus told the repentant thief on the Cross that he would find himself in Paradise the very second he closed his eyes forever in this world. “And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43).

Paul wrote that he desired so greatly to be in heaven that he was willing to go at a moment’s notice. At the same time he realised that it was necessary for him to minister to the church for a while yet. If he were going into some sort of limbo state upon death, he would surely



not have been so anxious to depart this life.

**“For to me, living is for Christ, and dying is even better. Yet if I live, that means fruitful service for Christ. I really don’t know which is better. I’m torn between two desires: Sometimes I want to live, and sometimes I long to go and be with Christ. That would be far better for me, but it is better for you that I live.” (Philippians 1:21-24 NLT).**

It was very necessary for Paul to continue his ministry to the church because Christians also need to think about eternity in a serious light.

Some Christians believe they can live as they like because Christ has dealt with the sinful state they were born in. They have received Him as Saviour, and are assured of a Home in Heaven. They go merrily on their way, living for themselves and material benefits, with scarcely a thought for eternal matters.

It is a shock to think that the average 20th Century Christian often goes to church only once a week for just over an hour. That is equivalent to spending about two days a year in concentrated worship! Contrast that with the Early Church, who met every day and broke bread regularly from house to house.

While no “born again”, genuine Christian will ever find themselves in Hell, the Bible does warn us that we have to live totally for the Lord in this life – or answer for our lifestyles at the Judgment Seat of Christ. This is a special time of reckoning for believers only.

“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:8- 10)

The “fire test” will be put to our lives and, sadly, some believers will make Heaven literally by the skin of their teeth as though they had been plucked from a burning building.

The believer goes to Heaven only because of Jesus. The Bible says our best deeds are like “filthy rags” in the light of God’s holy standard. We can never earn our salvation, but we do have a responsibility to live holy lives.

The Bible declares that what we do on earth to glorify the Lord will

have its reward and the Lord takes this seriously. So should we.

**“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” (I Corinthians 3:11-15).**

Those who live for Christ and serve Him as Lord and Master will enjoy His Presence in their lives now and for all eternity.

Here is something to think about. From the standpoint of time, we die and enter into Paradise while we await the time of the resurrection of the body.

From the standpoint of eternity, however, there is no period of waiting because there is no time in eternity. For God, everything is NOW. He sees the end from the beginning – He sees everything as an eternal now because He is outside of time. That is why the scriptures declare that we are, from God’s point of view, already glorified, even though many of us are still living on earth.

**“Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” (Romans 8:30).**

I Cor. 5:1-8 expresses that beautifully.

**For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down-when we die and leave these bodies-we will have a home in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long for the day when we will put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. For we will not be spirits without bodies, but we will put on new heavenly bodies. Our dying bodies make us groan and sigh, but it’s not that we want to die and have no bodies at all. We want to slip into our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by everlasting life. God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit. So we are always**

confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not at home with the Lord. That is why we live by believing and not by seeing. Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:1-8 NLT).

The Rich Man had missed the greatest opportunity afforded to mankind to share in this glorious experience.

Sadly, Jesus told the world that the vast majority of mankind would miss it too because of their stubborn refusal to repent and believe the Gospel.

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” (Matthew 7:13,14 NIV).

What was it like in Hades, the Holding Cell of Hell?

## **Chapter 5: HELL IS NOT A FUN PLACE**

*"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." Luke 16:23-24 (KJV)*

A popular American comedian thought hell was a joke. Completely oblivious to the terrors of that awful place, he sent a letter to the local press requesting that it be opened after he died.

He wrote: "If one may judge by the people who are surest of going there, it (heaven) must be a powerfully dull place, populated to a considerable and uncomfortable degree by prigs, time-servers, and unpleasant, aggressive individuals ... Hell may have a worse climate, but undoubtedly the company is sprightlier."

The letter was published in the newspaper in 1944, the day after his death. Unless he had repented and turned to the Lord before drawing his last breath, by the time it was read by an amused public, that comedian was already in eternity and fully aware of the truth of God's Word concerning hell.

Although Hades is just the foretaste of Hell (Gehenna), the "holding cell", as it were, we will be referring to the place of the dead for the purposes of this book as "hell" (with a small "h"). Everything experienced in hell (Hades) will be experienced in Hell (Gehenna), only with greater intensity.

What was the Rich Man's experience of hell? Was it a place of friendship and fellowship? A place of laughter, albeit scoffing laughter? Or was it as terrible as Jesus had warned.

The first thing we notice is his torment. He was - and still is - in an eternal state of conscious pain and suffering, comparable to that of burning. Knowing that the Lake of Fire (Gehenna) was still ahead makes his torment even more unbearable.

He was on fire and craved for just one drop of water to cool his tongue. Even without the physical body, the pain was very real and, worse, there was no hope of relief. No water. No comfort. No escape. Hell is indeed a horrible place.

Everything God is and represents is absent from that place.

Everything is total darkness, confusion and terror.

God is light, but His light does not shine there. God is love, but His love does not extend there. Without Him, there can be no friendship, companionship or comfort of any kind.

During November 2000, we heard with horror about that awful train smash in the mountains of Austria that resulted in over 150 people losing their lives. In the confusion, darkness and terrifying circumstances, we can be sure that there was no desire on the part of friends and family to spend time chatting about things of interest to them. They had only one desire – to escape from those awful flames and smoke to a place of safety.

That is what hell is like, according to Jesus. In fact, hell is worse than that because there is no end to the torment. At least there is some escape from torment on earth by physical death, but in hell there is no way out.

No wonder Jesus referred to it as a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. “Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 13:40-42)

Hell is definitely no joke. It is a place of terrible torment and suffering. Jesus knew that and this was the reason He took so much trouble to visit the earth and pay the price for sin Himself. Hell was never made for man, but for the devil and his angels and the Lord has done everything He could to save men, women and children from going there. The choice is up to the individual now.

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:’” (Matthew 25:41)

The Rich Man, as he looked back on his life, realized too late that he had passed by many opportunities to make his peace with God. Now he was tormented day and night, hour after hour, second after second in a place he was never born to be.

Was it real torment? Can a spiritual being feel pain? The Rich Man can answer that question too. He was in absolute agony, according to Jesus.

We know from personal experience that our “inner man” feels pain, even in this life. Sometimes the pain is so intense that it almost feels

physical and our body reacts by producing ulcers. Often that pain is far worse than physical injury.

The word “torment” is used a number of times in the Bible and always refers to the agony of conscious torment.

This word is used to describe the agony of the Roman Centurion’s servant. The centurion asked Jesus to heal the man. “Lord”, he said, “my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.” (Matthew 8:6).

It describes the agony suffered during the seven years of the Great Tribulation when people suffer indescribable pain as a result of the satanic forces leashed against them. “Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power ...And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.” (Revelation 9:3,5).

This same word is used to describe the eternal suffering of individuals who choose to serve the antichrist and who receive his mark in the “end times”. “Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” (Revelation 14:9-11)

The devil himself, together with the antichrist and his false prophet are destined to suffer that same torment. “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” (Revelation 20:10).

Why the torment? Does God take delight in the suffering of the lost? Absolutely not! “For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord GOD. “Therefore turn and live!” (Ezekiel 18:32).

God has given mankind a free will and there is nothing that will stop someone who chooses to go to hell.

Hell is essentially a place of punishment, according to the Scriptures. Every human being is born a sinner. That is why one never needs to teach children how to be bad! It comes naturally from the sin bias

within us.

Adam's sin affected the whole of the human race and it is that sin which keeps us out of heaven. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23).

Sin carries with it the penalty of death. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6 : 2 3)

Every individual has the choice whether **or not** to accept the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf

Here is the Gospel of Christ – the Good News in a nutshell. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16). God has allowed some to have visions of heaven and hell, which confirm Bible teaching.

John Wesley, the renowned Methodist preacher of the 1700's, for example, records a few of them in his journals. David Walters in his book "Children Aflame" shares some of the entries. Dated 17/7/1743, John Wesley wrote about a ten year old girl who collapsed and was declared dead. Later that day she revived and shared something of her experience. She had been given the most amazing vision of heaven, describing vividly the Glory of God, the singing and rejoicing and wonder of that magnificent place.

She had also been given a glimpse of hell and described it as "a dismal place, full of briers, and pits and ditches" and declared that she could scarcely bear "the stench and smoke of brimstone." "I saw a vast many people", she said, "that seemed to be chained down, crying and gnashing their teeth. The man (an angel accompanying her) told me, the sins they delighted in once, they are tormented with now.

I saw a vast number who stood up cursing and blaspheming God, and spitting at each other." Another entry in John Wesley's diary, dated 6/8/1759, records the supernatural vision of eternity given to fifteen-year old Alice Miller.

"I found her sitting on a stool", he wrote, "and leaning against the wall, with her eyes open and fixed upward. I made a motion as if going to strike; but she continued immovable. Her face showed an unspeakable mixture of reverence and love, while silent tears stole down her cheeks. Her lips were a little open, and sometimes moved; but not enough to cause any sound. I do not know whether I ever saw a human face look so beautiful."

He watched her for about half an hour, when suddenly her face changed. "I observed her countenance change into the form of fear, pity, and distress. Then she burst into a flood of tears, and cried out, "Dear Lord, they will be damned! They will all be damned!" But In about five minutes her smile returned and only love and joy appeared on her face. This was repeated several times; about seven, her senses returned." He asked her where she had been. "I have been with my Savior. In heaven or on earth; I cannot tell; but I was in glory!"

"Why then did you cry?" he asked her and her response was immediate. "Not for myself; but for the world; for I saw they were on the brink of hell."

David Walters records a similar experience of his own in his book. He recalls a time when he was ministering in a church where the Spirit of God was moving upon many children. A little boy of about seven years of age suddenly began to cry out. "His voice became stronger and louder, and he began to scream "My legs! My legs! They are burning! They are burning!"

David and other concerned adults came around him and began to pray and a beautiful smile of peace changed his whole face. "After about half an hour he came to himself and asked me if he could tell what had happened to him. 'I found myself in hell', he said, 'and there were terrible flames burning my legs. There were also horrible creatures with great claws that began to tear at my legs; the pain was awful. As you prayed for me, I suddenly left that horrible place and found myself in heaven. It was beautiful and I felt a great peace. I saw many things, including my uncle and my grandfather.'"

Jesus was preaching on the horrors of hell one day when He suddenly broke into prayer, thanking the Father that even small children could understand these things.

**"But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment than for you." At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes." (Matthew**



**11:22-25).**

Yes, hell — the place of torment — definitely not a fun place.

## **Chapter 6: HELL IS A REAL PLACE**

*"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. Rut Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." Luke 16:23-25 (KJV)*

The Rich Man saw Abraham and Lazarus in the distance. They were alive and happy in a very real place. And he was alive and very unhappy, also in a very real place.

One of the first things we notice about Dives is that his five senses are still very much in operation in spite of the fact that his physical body is no longer with him. It has returned to the elements and awaits the Judgment Day when it will be resurrected and reunited to his "spirit man".

Can he feel? The torment of Hades was so real he was absolutely desperate. Burning fire, acrid smoke, ghastly smells, excruciating pain ... Yes, he could feel and he was in terrible torment according to Jesus.

There was no time to sit around playing cards, dancing and singing, and reminiscing about life on earth with his chums. This man was writhing in absolute agony, terrified in the darkness and chaos all around him.

Those who have lain on a sickbed, wracked with fever, their whole body craving for a drop of water can only begin to imagine the trauma of this man. There is no water in hell and no more death. That torment is forever.

The demons and other strange creatures that had been forced to take their opportunities at harassing him on earth now had free reign. There were no prayers of the saints to keep them at bay, no sense of the Presence of God. He was in their territory now and they made the most of it while they had the opportunity.

They know their turn is coming too. When Hell (Gehenna) is opened and all evil cast into it, the devil and his demons will be unbearably tormented for ever, together with the lost.

Satan may like to make people believe he is the "king of hell" and that he will be tormenting the lost with his pitchfork and fiery red tail,

but the truth is that Hell (Gehenna) will be as terrifying for him as it is for the lost.

Hell was created by God to deal with the devil and his angels. Words can never begin to describe the horror of that place. He is doing everything in his power to take men, women and children with him to a Christless eternity.

Many people do not like the idea of describing Hell as a literal fire. However, Jesus used the idea of fire on purpose to express the awfulness of this place.

Whether or not it is literal in the sense we know fire on earth, we can believe that it is every bit as terrifying as fire and worse. A fiery death on earth is but a shadow of the eternal fiery continuous death of hell. Jesus used the strongest possible picture to convince men, women and children to accept His offer of salvation from that place.

He was so convinced of the serious eternal consequences of hell that Jesus came to earth, took on a human body, and paid the price for sin personally. That is why the scriptures declare that He is the ONLY WAY to God, the ONLY TRUTH about God, and the very LIFE of God. "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6).

There is no other way to escape the consequences of sin. "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12).

The Rich Man could see. He lifted up his eyes and saw Lazarus and Abraham, enjoying the glories of heaven in the far distance.

He could see the flames, the darkness, the demons and the other suffering sinners. There was no escape from those awful sights. They would be before him throughout eternity. On earth he could have walked away or shut his eyes and refused to look. In hell he had no choice.

His ears were working perfectly too. He could hear Abraham's reply above the screams of suffering sinners, the mocking of the demons, and his own cries. There was nothing he could do to drown out the terror in the voices around him. Hell is an awful place and no-one in their right minds could want to go there. It is not a matter to joke about either. It is more terrifying and awful than words can express.

Dives could speak. He cried out and said: "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

At last he had begun to understand that this life is our only opportunity to repent and turn to the Lord. “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts ...” (Hebrews 3:7-8).

He had hardened his heart on earth and now it was too late. There was no more opportunity to change. He had an appointment at the Judgment Seat before facing the final horror of Hell. “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,” (Hebrews 9:27).

The scriptures tell us it is impossible to truly repent unless the Lord draws us to Himself. “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:44).

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, righteousness and judgment to come and, without that conviction that we are sinners, we feel no need for the Saviour. “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:” (John 16:8).

God is not willing that anyone should perish eternally and go to hell and He has made sure that every opportunity is given to mankind to accept the Saviour. His promise is that “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” (Romans 10:13). That is why Jesus is called the Saviour of the World.

Dives really needed the Saviour now ... but it was too late. The Holy Spirit was no longer working in his life and it was now impossible to repent. He does not even try to call on the Name of the Lord. He calls out to Abraham instead, the revered father of the Hebrew Race. But Abraham can do nothing for him.

Unchanged in character and heart as when he lived on earth, it was now too late for repentance and Dives does not even express remorse for his sins. He asks only for water to cool his tongue, not for his sins to be forgiven. He had missed his opportunity. Dying as a sinner on earth, he would remain that way forever.

All his senses were operating ... except the most important one – faith. He was forever separated from the Author of Faith. It was, and still is, a terrible tragedy.

There are many people, just like Dives, who live in the “now” and believe there is plenty of time to get their spiritual lives in order. Many of them have already found themselves sharing that dreadful “place of the dead” with him. Even as you read this book, people are slipping into hell by the thousands.

“The road to hell is paved with good intentions”, wrote Baxter of Kidderminster (quoted by Samuel Johnson and Barnard Shaw).

Jesus said that few of this world’s residents would find their place in heaven - most would be lost for eternity. “Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:14).

I recall the story of a young man who came to work one day, full of excitement about his plans for the weekend. A Christian in the office struck

up a conversation with him and the opportunity arose to share the gospel in a very clear way. The young man was interested. “But not now”, he said, “I am still young and have plenty of time to think about such serious things. Later.” That very afternoon he slipped in a puddle of water, struck his head against some machinery and died instantly. There was no “later” for him.

There was no “later” for the Rich Man either. Here today ... and gone tomorrow. How he wished – and still wishes – he had taken these things more seriously. Right now he is writhing in pain, lost, confused and traumatised and it will be that way forever. It is just too awful to contemplate.

Newport grasped the reality of an eternity without Christ and wrote: “Oh the insufferable pangs of hell. Oh eternity, forever and forever”.

So did a writer named Charteres. He said: “I would gladly give one hundred and fifty thousand dollars to have it proved there is no hell.”

No wonder Jesus spoke more often about hell than heaven. He came to earth from the realms of eternity and He knew, more than any person, the reality of that place.

Hell is a real place, belonging to the realm of eternity far beyond time and space.

The Wesleyan Catechism (“for children of a tender age”) defines hell as follows:

**Question:** What sort of place is hell?

**Answer:** Hell is a dark and bottomless pit of fire and brimstone.

**Question:** How will the wicked be punished there?

**Answer:** The wicked will be punished in hell by having their bodies tormented by fire and their souls by a sense of the wrath of God.

**Question:** How long will these torments last?

**Answer:** The torments of hell will last for ever and ever.

## **WHERE IS HELL?**

The Bible always refers to it as being “below”. Its inhabitants “descend” into it. “Hell from beneath is excited about you, to meet you at your coming ...” (Isa. 14:9).

“Therefore Sheol has enlarged itself and opened its mouth beyond measure; Their glory and their multitude and their pomp, And he who is jubilant, shall descend into it.” (Isaiah 5:14)

In contrast, Heaven is referred to as being in the North or “above”. “... Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ “ (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, “ ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ “ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).” (Rom. 10:7,8).

There are many, of course, who don’t agree with Jesus about the existence of a literal hell.

There has been a tremendous shift in religious thinking in recent years and few preachers talk about hell any more it seems.

Hell is still the Unspoken Truth.

Some religious teachers have redefined Hell as a state rather than a place. They would have men believe that the Bible teaching on “hell” is speaking only of the state of those who freely and definitely separate themselves from God. They teach that it is a figurative place, only portrayed in the Bible as a “pool of fire” or a “second death”.

A recent poll in the USA revealed that more than half the people polled believed this teaching. They regarded hell as an “anguished state of existence eternally separated from God” - though none of them expected to go there! They did not consider it to be a real place, but just a state of being.

The Rich Man found that the opposite was true. His pain, torment and awful sense of separation from God were very real. Jesus said that the Dives found himself in hell and that is the truth.

This was no figurative place or state of being. How he wishes, even today, that it were the case. The testimony of Jesus was he was tormented by fire and a sense of the wrath of God.

God has given mankind a free will and we may choose to believe the often contradictory philosophies of religious thinkers — or the testimony of Jesus Christ. It’s an important decision because it affects our eternal future.

## **Chapter 7: SCENES FROM THE GRAVE**

*“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” Luke 16:23-24 (KJV)*

“Are you afraid?” a minister of religion asked his seriously ill parishioner as he sat at his bedside. The man was on the point of death and nothing more could be done for him medically.

“I’ve never been afraid of anything in my life”, he responded. He looked at the minister with tears running down his eyes. “For the first time in my life, I am terrified – I am afraid to die.” Family and friends standing around the bedside looked uncomfortable. They had nothing to say. Suddenly it did not seem funny to make jokes about death. None of them knew how to bring peace to this man’s heart. They looked at each other in distress. If there was a Heaven to gain and a Hell to shun, they had no advice for him.

The Man of God opened his Bible and began to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. “All have sinned”, he said, “and sin must be judged. There is no way out and no negotiation. Eternal death is the penalty for sin. That’s the Word of God.”

The man began to sob. Like Dives, he could find no time for God in his busy life. The weekdays were full and Sunday was the only time he had to work in his garden, go fishing and pursue personal interests. It had never dawned on him that life could be so short and death so final. Was there no hope?

As he listened to the age-old story, a glimmer of hope began at last to arise in his heart. Jesus had come to earth to pay the price for mankind’s sin. Yes, he believed that.

He knew he was a sinner and he knew he deserved to go to Hell. Suddenly he began to understand the importance of Christ’s death on the cross. It was no longer just a story for Easter-time. It was real and very relevant.

He looked up with newfound faith in his heart. “Jesus died for me”, he whispered. “I believe! He has forgiven me.”

With that he died, the shadow of a smile on his face. Peace filled the

room and everyone knew something significant had just taken place. Like the “thief on the cross” who died at the side of Jesus, he found the Lord at the last moment and was assured of a place in Paradise.

That deathbed experience has been repeated time and again as believers have fallen asleep in this life, and opened their eyes – just like Lazarus – in Paradise.

In the ministry one often has the experience of sitting at the deathbed of people as they slip into eternity. I have done that many times and what a privilege it is to see believers go Home to their Lord.

Elaine Mather stands out in my mind. This elderly saint, who had served the Lord so faithfully for many years, longed to see Jesus. She had no fear of dying and anticipated with joy the prospect of being with her Lord for eternity.

At the end she could hardly speak or move. As the family gathered around her bed, this frail old lady lifted up both arms and began to sing the praises of the Lord. We sang along with her and the Presence of the Lord filled that hospital ward. She went into Eternity with praise on her lips and joy in her heart.

One of the patients in the intensive care ward at McCord Zulu Hospital that night watched with interest. He called one of the family to his bedside. “I want to know Jesus too”, he said.

The family had the great privilege and joy of leading him to the Lord right then and there while their mother’s body - the tent she had lived in – lay there in peace. Elaine was already in the Presence of the Lord.

Elaine was a soul-winner all her Christian life and it was a fitting conclusion to her earthly ministry.

For others death has been a horrific experience as they faced an eternity without Christ.

Francis Grim tells the story of a man who died without hope. Those who were at his bedside that day were traumatised for years afterwards as they witnessed a lost soul slipping into hell.

P-K-, he says, was a talented and wealthy man, but he hated everything connected with God, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Bible. He talked, lectured and published books and tracts against the Saviour and the sacred Scriptures, circulating them freely wherever he could. His influence for evil was very great for many years.

The family were gathered around, together with a neighbour. They said it was a sight they would never forget. He clenched his teeth and blood spurted from his nostrils as he cried out “Hell! Hell! Hell!” in



absolute terror.

His family could not endure the agony of that deathbed scene and they ran out of the house. They fled to an adjoining wood across the road and remained among the trees until all became quiet at home.

One by one they ventured back, to find the husband and father cold in death. He had literally been left to die alone, abandoned by God and man.

The famous French infidel, Francois Voltaire, had a similar experience. He had once proudly proclaimed that Christianity would cease to exist. He had no use for God in his life. "In twenty years", he said, "Christianity will be no more. My single hand shall destroy the edifice it took twelve apostles to rear."

The day he died, there was no bravado about him. Even his doctor expressed astonishment at the emotional torment his patient experienced before passing into eternity.

"I am abandoned by God and man. O Christ, O Christ Jesus", he cried out.

He then said, "Doctor, I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six months of life."

The doctor answered, "Sir, you cannot live six weeks."

"Then", said Voltaire, "I shall go to hell," and with that he died.

There have been some who have come back from the brink of death and shared their stories. Authenticated cases down through the Church age of people who apparently died and were permitted to return testify to the reality of life beyond the grave.

A man also named Lazarus, from Bethany in Israel, shook his generation during the ministry of Jesus. He had been dead for four days when Jesus raised him from the dead. His sisters thought he was gone for good and they protested when Jesus asked to go to the tomb.

"Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days." (John 11:39)

At the command of Christ, the Bible records that this Lazarus came back from the dead. Had his experience been recorded and preserved it would certainly have made interesting reading.

Similar occurrences have taken place throughout history and the various accounts of what happened between the time the spirit left the body and later returned are in close harmony with Bible revelation in most instances.

Known as “NDE’s” (near death experiences), these are being closely studied by psychologists and researchers, who believe that there are common factors experienced by the dying.

At the point of death, they say, the dying person often hears a loud and disturbing noise, seemingly in his own head, which may take the form either of buzzing or ringing. Often the dying person finds himself outside of his physical body, looking down on it.

He then begins to move at high speed through a long dark tunnel, passage, or space of some kind, which is generally confined and usually dark.

Many have said that they have seen an extremely bright light marking the end of the tunnel.

Those who have good near-death experiences say that they are conscious of emerging into the light and being overwhelmed by a sensation of peace and loving-kindness. Friends and relatives appear, who welcome and reassure them.

A “warm shining being” is often encountered, who shows them their life on earth in a kind of panorama.

At some stage the deceased comes to a barrier – a frontier of sorts – which he must pass through to enter the next phase of existence. It is at this point that most have returned to their bodies.

One of the most interesting near-death experiences I have personally encountered is that of a Full Gospel Pastor in South Africa.

We have been friends for many years and it was with great sadness that I heard of the terrible car accident that had left him in a critical state and in a paraplegic condition.

I was sitting at the bedside of Marie Nortje (a mutual friend) in Entabeni Hospital in Durban, South Africa, one Friday night. She had just passed into eternity and “Oom Sampie”, her husband, and the rest of the family were standing around the bed.

I walked to the telephone to call the Senior Pastor of our Church with the news. His wife answered the telephone.

“Listen to this!” she said excitedly. “Wynand’s wife has just called us from his hospital ward. He died and went to Heaven – and then returned back to life. He told his wife that he has just seen Marie come into heaven. She went right past him, without acknowledging him. She was in such a hurry to see Jesus!”

No one knew yet that Marie had died, but my Pastor friend saw her in heaven at the exact moment she died in Durban. They were hundreds

of miles apart and he was not even aware that Marie was ill.

Incidentally, he was supernaturally healed of his injuries and his testimony has shaken hundreds of people.

Not everybody has such an exciting deathbed experience. Researchers tell us that many people report terrifying experiences.

“There are also NDEs that are obviously negative”, say the researchers. “They often involve a feeling of being dragged down into a pit, rather than a tunnel and sometimes demons are involved.”

Evelyn Hazell, a London-based art historian shared her experience of near death. “I had reached a critical stage in the illness and was hovering between life and death”, she said. “I was aware of being involved in an intense and very real struggle for my life.”

“A three-legged being was pulling my legs down to infinite depths. I knew that if I relaxed and gave in, I would be dead. I believe this struggle went on for some considerable time and I eventually managed to break away from whatever it was pulling me down.”

Hazell went on to make a full recovery, but she has never forgotten her terrifying ordeal at the threshold of death.

“I do not believe it was a dream or hallucination. In every way I was lucid – I was just terribly ill. If nothing else, it did prove to me that in certain situations refusing to fight an illness will lead to death.”

A similar experience haunts Jane, a woman who fought for her life after a miscarriage.

“It was an awful feeling – like I was going down a big hole and I couldn’t get up. I was going into this big pit. I was trying to claw my way back up and kept slipping.”

Various explanations have been put forward to account for these experiences, ranging from the effects of medication to the lack of oxygen reaching the brain in its final moments.

Such explanations, however, fail to explain the consistency of the experience. Hallucinations brought on by drugs or anoxia is typically random and senseless, but most of the NDE’s have common features.

The eerie parallels between the reports of NDEs and traditional view of heaven and hell also defy simple explanation, according to the researchers.

Harder still to understand, they say, are reports of NDEs from hospital patients whose ECG traces became completely flat during resuscitation – showing that there was no activity in their brain. These experiences, therefore, could not be hallucinations.

Tony Lawrence, a university lecturer in psychology, told a local magazine who reported on his research that he was hoping to find as many people as possible who have had negative NDEs to see if any consistent picture emerges which may explain their cause.

Professor Howard Storm, an art professor at Northern Kentucky University, had always vigorously rejected the idea that there was life after death. At the age of 38, he collapsed from a perforated stomach while visiting Paris. What happened next was so traumatic it changed his life.

Before being operated on he “died”, experiencing a hellish realm so real that it completely changed the course of his life.

According to his testimony, he found himself standing next to his body. He spoke to his wife and the patient in the adjoining bed. Neither responded. He wondered if he was going mad.

He heard voices calling him to follow them. They would not say who they were or where they were going. He felt very tired and weary, his stomach was burning and he was cold.

The beings he followed began making fun of him as he walked into a fog that got thicker and thicker, darker and darker, until eventually he could not even see his hand in front of his face.

He wanted desperately to go back, but could not. He was aware of the beings crowding him and he started swearing at them. He hit out, hurting his hand – but they just laughed and hit him back. He began to realise that they were enjoying inflicting pain on him. It gave them great joy and pleasure and he eventually fell down exhausted and spent, full of hopelessness, despair and pain.

Suddenly he heard the command to pray. He wondered how that would help, but the Voice persisted. “Pray”, it said emphatically.

He did not know any prayers so he began quoting Psalm 23, then parts of the “Lord’s Prayer”, and anything else that came to mind from his childhood.

The beings became agitated. They screamed at him to stop praying and said nobody would hear – there was no such thing as a God – and faith was just superstition and nonsense.

He kept praying desperately, and finally they disappeared.

“I felt so bad”, he testified later “because I did not believe any of the stuff I had been praying. I just kept doing it because it worked.”

As he was lying there, feeling absolutely helpless, windless, and with an incredible sense of sadness and aloneness, he heard the Voice again.

This time it said: “Jesus loves you”.

A light went on in his spirit and the realisation dawned on him that it was true. He screamed out: “Please, Jesus, save me!”

He became aware of a small light penetrating the terrible darkness around him. It got very big and seemed to be coming right at him. As the light surrounded him, he discovered that it was more than a light – it was the Lord.

That experience had such a profound effect on Howard that he became a Christian Minister of the Gospel.

There have been others who have written entire books about their near-death experiences.

Marietta Davis lay in a trance for nine days during which time she experienced the most remarkable visions of heaven and hell. Her story is recorded in a book entitled “Scenes beyond the grave” edited by Gordon Lindsay.

In his preface he says: “Although many witnesses attest the genuineness of the experiences of Marietta, nothing speaks more of the book’s authenticity than the contents themselves. Doctrinally its message agrees absolutely with the scriptural revelation as to the character of man’s existence after death. The story gives many additional details, which depict clearly what takes place when the human spirit leaves the body. Needless to say the unfolding drama is a most solemn object lesson, to which each reader will do well to take heed.”

Marietta describes finding herself plummeting down into a deep abyss. There were sulphurous flashes and in the semi-darkness she saw floating about her “grim spectres enveloped in the fires of unhallowed passions”.

She cried out: “Oh for one short hour on earth! – for space however brief, for preparation of soul, and to secure fitness for the world of spirits!”

In her despair she plunged farther into the nether darkness. Soon she discovered she was in the abode of the wicked dead.

Here Marietta heard all kinds of strange sounds, voices, obscene allusion and terrible curses. There was no water “to allay fierce and intolerable thirst”. The fountains and rivulets that appeared were only mirages. Fruit that appeared on the trees burned the hand that plucked them. The very atmosphere carried the elements of wretchedness and disappointment.

She met someone she had known on earth and was terribly distressed. The realisation that she could recognise people shocked her. “Those spirits I had known on earth, and when I saw them there I knew them still. Oh, how changed! They were the very embodiment of sorrow and remorse.”

The angel accompanying Marietta explained the law that determines where a soul goes at death. God does not willingly send people to Hades, he told her, but at death their spirit is attracted to the region of those with whom they are in harmony. Those who know the Lord go to Him.

Those who remain in their sin find their place in the abode of sinners.

Another writer, Mary K. Baxter, also penned her visions of heaven and hell, which she claims to have experienced in March 1976. She too speaks of the dreadful fate of the lost.

Hell, she wrote, is a place of piercing screams, the smell of decaying flesh, evil spirits, ugly snakes, and fear that can be tasted. There is no love, no compassion, and no rest –only sorrow beyond belief.

Her book is horrendous and, while much of it may be her interpretation of the horror she experienced in that vision, it certainly leaves one with the feeling that Hell is even worse than human words can describe.

While we know that many people have different experiences of life and death and we cannot draw final conclusions from the human mind, at the same time - when these experiences remind one of the inspired teaching of the Bible and the ministry of Jesus – it should cause us to think again.

There is life after death and our eternal destiny is at stake. This is not a matter to be taken lightly.

Jesus captured the horror of it in just these few words: “And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.” (Luke 16:23 KJV)

Dives wishes he had given life and death more serious thought.

He could feel, taste, smell, touch, think and remember. Why was he in this dreadful place? Was it because he had been rich and enjoyed every benefit earth could offer, while Lazarus had been poor? Do the rich go to hell and the poor automatically go to heaven?

Why was he here?

## **Chapter 8: HELL, HOME OF THE UNGODLY**

*“But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.”*

*Luke 16:25 (KJV)*

Dives was not in hell because he had enjoyed a good life on earth. Abraham was also a man of means, with much possessions. So was Job. That did not keep them out of heaven.

Dives found himself in this awful predicament because he had taken his blessings for granted and misused them to serve himself and his own interests. He had been his own “god” on earth and lived as he pleased. His commitment had been to himself, and not to the Living God.

Jesus said it was such a serious matter to be committed to God that it required allegiance over and above even that to your family. “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:33).

The bottom line .. He is Lord of all — or not Lord at all — demonstrated by a heart condition. “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

Riches can be a blessing, or a curse ... depending on whether or not we use them to glorify God in our lives. For Dives they had proved to be a curse.

Lazarus had never enjoyed much of this world’s goods, but he had a heart condition that opened the Gates of Heaven to him. Whether he had been blessed with riches or not was irrelevant. His heart belonged to the Lord and that was all that mattered.

## **HEAVEN IS A BEAUTIFUL PLACE**

As awful as hell is, Heaven is indescribably beautiful and pure. The Bible speaks of a place of glory, beauty and riches such as we have never seen or experienced in this life. The gold of its streets, the jewels encrusted in its walls, the glory described in the Bible make the best possible use of elements known and appreciated by humans. Heaven is even better than the words used to describe it. In the same

way, Hell is much worse than any human words we may use to speak of it. Far, far worse and more terrifying.

Heaven is so pure that the Bible tells us nothing unclean will be allowed to enter it. “A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it...” (Isaiah 35:8).

Nothing that detracts from the glory and purity of God will be found there. “But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.” (Revelation 21:27).

God is so holy that He cannot and will not spend eternity in the presence of sin. “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness ... “ (Habakkuk 1:13). He is Light and all darkness will flee from His presence.

Imagine, if you will, that the Lord opened the Gates of Heaven to all and sundry – sinners and saints. It wouldn’t be too long before Heaven became Hell! Crime, anger, lust and all the other things lurking in unredeemed hearts would soon be expressed. The angels would have to do double duty as security guards!

The fact is, sinners would be most unhappy in the pure atmosphere of heaven. If they can hardly bear to enjoy worship in this life, how much less will they be able to stand the fullness of His Presence in Heaven? It would be an experience worse than death. Sinners will definitely not be comfortable there.

Many recognise that and so they look for like companionship in the hereafter, like our comedian. The sad fact is that there is no companionship and friendship in hell. Darkness, chaos, pain-filled moments that stretch into eternity are all that is ahead for those in hell.

## **HELL, HOME OF THE UNGODLY**

Mankind was never created for this kind of destiny. The Bible is clear about that. Hell was created for the devil and his angels, never for men, women and children. They choose to go there of their own accord by rejecting the only Way of Escape – the Lord Jesus Christ, the all-sufficient Saviour. “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:’” (Matthew 25:41).

In the beginning, God stepped back and looked at His creation and



pronounced it “good” according to the Genesis account. He enjoyed unbroken fellowship with His creation ... until the day sin cut man off from his God.

Sinners cannot bear the pure and holy Presence of the Living God, and Adam and Eve hid from the Lord. “And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” (Genesis 3:8).

It was one of the saddest moments of all time because from that day forward all mankind inherited the principle of sin from their forefathers. King David knew that and he said: “Behold, i was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.” (Psalm 51:5). He was not born out of wedlock, but in a condition of sin inherited from Adam.

Everybody is born in the same condition. That is why we never teach babies to be bad! It comes naturally from the bias of sin within every heart. The testimony of scripture — confirmed by our experience — is that “They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.” (Psalm 14:3)... “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23).

There are many who do not believe they are sinners because they have never murdered anyone, or committed any of the more heinous crimes of humanity. Yet if we think about it, none of us would dare claim to be wholly good.

Think about this: Mother Theresa is acknowledged by the world to be a woman of rare good deeds. Ask the most self-righteous person in the world if they, would consider themselves to be as “good” as her. Do you consider yourself to be in the same league?

Now how about this?. Do you consider that Mother Theresa is as “good” as God? She never claimed that for herself! If we are not even as “good” as Mother Theresa, how far then do we ourselves fall short of God’s standard of holiness? No wonder the Bible says that “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (I John 1:8)

We do the things we do ... and say the things we say ... because we are sinners by nature. Most thinking people who have experienced life know that below the veneer of civilization of modern man, lies murky depths. Although we feel keen disappointment, we are never really surprised at the depths of lust and depravity around us. Man is

inherently evil and desperately needs Someone to free him from the penalty and power of sin. And that is why Jesus came.

No one has to go to hell if they receive the “way out” offered by God Himself. The Rich Man will spend eternity regretting his lack of interest in spiritual matters of such great importance.

Sin has a penalty — eternal separation from the holy presence of God. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

An old hymn of the Christian Church puts it this way: There was none Other good enough the pay the price of sin; He only could unlock the Gate of Heaven and let us in.”

There is only one way to escape hell and that is to have our sin paid for and forgiven. It is much the same as if you owed a great deal of money to a company and were totally unable to pay. Imagine the debt collectors on your doorstep demanding immediate settlement. Hot on their heels comes the warrant for your arrest. There is no escape prison looms ahead.

And then, suddenly, someone you never expected to intervene steps forward and settles your debt in full. You have two choices. You can be grateful and receive their kindness — or you can reject their offer and insist on paying the penalty yourself.

It's your choice.

The Bible declares that the person who sins shall pay the penalty for sin. “Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins shall die.” (Ezekiel 18:4).

Someone has to pay ... and God Himself became the sacrifice for sin. Christ Jesus came into this world to pay the price of our sin with His own life. The Bible tells us that He lived on earth for something like thirty-three years, without sin of any kind. His testimony on the eve of his crucifixion was that the devil could find nothing against Him. “I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.” (John 14:30)

The scriptures declare that He was tempted in body, soul and spirit with every kind of temptation known to man, yet He did not fall into temptation for one moment. He “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15). That's the record ... and that is why He alone was able to pay for the sin of mankind.

Jesus Christ was no ordinary man. He came from the glories of heaven, took on a human body and dealt fully and finally with the thing

that keeps His precious creation out of Heaven.

What about Dives? Jesus had not yet given His life when Dives died. Did His great sacrifice not avail for him? Was there some other way of salvation for those who lived and died before Jesus came?

No, the Bible tells us that God lives in the “now”. As far as He is concerned, the Cross happened “now” and that is why the Bible calls Christ “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Revelation 13:8).

The Old Testament saints looked forward to the Cross ... and the New Testament saints look back to the Cross.

The Cross marks the spot where men, women and children make their decision for Christ — or reject His work of salvation with eternal consequences. This is the Gospel in a nutshell.

Many agree that man is not as famous as we would like to believe sometimes and they acknowledge that sin must be atoned for. Some go even further and agree with the Bible that people who die in sin will find themselves separated from the Lord in a state of hell.

But this is where the agreement stops as they argue that people will suffer the consequences of their sin for a limited time and then either become purified or simply cease to exist.

## **Chapter 9: A GENTLER, KINDER HELL?**

*“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments,..” Luke 16:23 (KJV)*

We have already taken note of the annihilation theory that puts forward the view that the ungodly will die and then completely cease to exist.

Proponents of this theory believe that all trace of the unrighteous will be destroyed forever or, as one popular magazine would have it, Hell becomes “just a big nothing!”

Some of the mainline churches in Britain have shown support for this modern perception of hell. Rather than a huge inferno that burns forever, hell simply becomes a state of nothingness. The traditional perception of hell, it is declared, has become as outdated as the popular image of the devil as a creature with horns, a tail and a pitchfork.

Bishop John Taylor of the Anglican Church in Britain says: “Hell as ultimate non-being is the way in which we’ve put it. The horrible demons are the imaginations of inventors and medievalists.”

A South African Hervormde Kerk theologian agrees. He caused quite a stir when he wrote in a newspaper column that there was no such thing as the devil. In ancient times, he said, people thought in a very concrete way so evil was portrayed as a creature. Modern man no longer needs such symbols.

The Biblical “Hell”, we are told, is simply an old-time religious belief and no longer acceptable to the modern thinker.

This viewpoint is not supported by the Bible which firmly declares that it is “appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27), followed by an eternal sentence of a continuous fiery death in hell.

**“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented DAY AND NIGHT FOREVER. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were**

opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:10-15)

There is no escape by disappearing from the cosmic scene. Annihilation is not a Biblical option. People may choose to believe this theory, but the Lord was very clear about the eternity of hell. Jesus said: “And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matthew 25:46).

He was so convinced of the truth of His words that Jesus declared: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” (Matthew 24:35).

Some theologians are so distressed at the thought that God could possibly condemn people to an eternal hell that they believe the traditional belief in unending torment is based more on pagan philosophy than on a correct understanding of scripture. Eternal punishment, they insist, is eternal only in the sense that it has eternal consequences. Failure to receive salvation will result in eternal separation from God, but not a continued existence.

Some believe there will be fire — and then nothing, While the Bible does speak about eternal punishment, they argue, it is eternal only in the sense that it is irrevocable. The sentence cannot be negotiated or reversed.

The fire of punishment, we are told, will consume the sinner until he is destroyed and finally ceases to exist. The torment experienced will be temporary.

The Bible does not support that theory at all. In fact, we are told that the lost are awake day and night forever and their torment has no end. “And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” (Revelation 14:11)

Jesus said that the possibility of going to Hell was so serious that temporary deprivations were not worthy to be compared with eternal loss. In the following conversation, He refers to Hell (Gehenna) three

times. This is not just a threat. It is a very serious warning, not to be taken lightly.

**“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched; where Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.’ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched; where Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.’ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire; where Their worm does not die,  
And the fire is not quenched.’” (Mark 9:43-48)**

Jesus used human images like fire to convey the seriousness of Hell. As Dr. Francois Moller of the Apostolic Faith Mission’s theological college in Johannesburg, South Africa, comments: “God reveals His truth according to our capacity for understanding”.

The reality, however, is far worse than any human words or imagery could describe.

There are some who accept the imagery of fire used by Jesus, but re-interpret what He said. They believe that the function of fire is to totally destroy the thing being burned. Therefore, the destroyed person must cease to exist in the same way.

When you read the Bible, however, and listen to Jesus, the impression is definitely not given that the sinner will be destroyed. The opposite is, in fact, true.

The sinner suffers destruction, it is true, but it is an eternal destruction with no way out. This is so frightening that it is difficult to understand why people take it so lightly.

Does the word “destroy” always mean total destruction? Sometimes we say that an alcoholic destroys his life. We certainly don’t mean that he ceases to exist, What we are saying is that his alcoholism has robbed him of all the beautiful and good things of life that he was destined to enjoy.

That is what the fires of Hell are like. Nothing remains that is worthy of the word “life”. Hell is an eternal death - called the “second death”

in the scriptures. “Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.” (Revelation 20:14).

Jesus said we should never fear man or the devil, but give our total allegiance to God. “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28).

Interestingly, the precise Greek word used for “destroy” in this verse is “apolesai”. Sometimes it is translated “destroy”. At other times it is translated “lost”, but it is the same Greek word with the same meaning.

It is used to describe the condition of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son in Luke chapter 15. Here it certainly does not mean “destroyed” in the sense of being annihilated.

“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbours together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’” (Luke 15:8-9).

These precious objects were not annihilated. They were lost.

Jesus used “apolesai” to describe the Nation of Israel. Here, again, the word is translated “lost”

“But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Matthew 10:6).

The teaching of the Bible is that those who do not have genuine faith in the Living God are already “lost” in this life. They are the “living dead”. It is only by receiving Christ as Personal Saviour that they experience the life of God flowing through them.

This is what makes it possible to go to heaven. It is not our good works or our good character, but eternal life that continues forevermore.

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins;” (Ephesians 2:1)

Eternal life and eternal death are always contrasted in the Bible. In the same way that the saved will live forever in the Presence of God, the lost will live forever away from His manifest Presence.

Those who have eternal life have the blessing of the Kingdom of God and enjoy life to the full. Conversely, eternal death means an existence devoid of the blessings of the Age to come.

When we think of fire in terms of punishment we associate it with

conscious torment and the pain of being burned. This is how the Rich Man experienced hell.

This is how he is experiencing hell right now, in the company of millions, as he awaits the Day of Judgment.

While some supporting annihilation allow for a brief time of torment before the sinner disappears forever, there are others who try to empty Hell. We have already commented on their theory of universalism.

Universalists believe sinners will spend some time in a state of limbo until they are purified and made fit for heaven, dubbed by some as a “gentler, kinder hell”.

This is a popular doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, for example. Their brand of universalism is known as “purgatory”. According to their teaching, “purgatory” is a “place of purification” where the souls of men at death must wait for a time in order to be purged from their sins by physical suffering, before they can enter heaven. The “prayers” and “masses” by the living are claimed to contribute to their release. While in this state of limbo they are said to be “still exiles from heaven and fit subjects for divine clemency”.

The Bible does not support this view either. It is a doctrine based on the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church rather than on the scriptures.

It’s history dates back to the 3rd Century AD when Clement of Alexandria, President of the Catechetical School of the Church, began teaching that the Christian Church should not ignore pagan philosophy. He believed that all learning had elements of great value and that the church should gather in the treasures of wisdom and knowledge from all sources and use them for Christ. At the same time, he maintained that all true learning was given by God to lead men to the final revelation of Himself in the Holy Scriptures.

Many of the pagan religions at the time believed in purgatory, viewed as a place under the earth where the souls of men were purged through suffering severe torments. This philosophy began to find its way into Christian thinking in the attempt to marry Bible doctrine with pagan religious beliefs.

Origen (185-254), successor to Clement as head of the Catechetical School, took up this idea with great enthusiasm. He believed that the human soul goes through successive incarnations and that the unequal state of men, angels and devils must be due to their experiences in the various worlds they have been in.



He taught that souls are always rising and falling as a reward or punishment for their actions in each successive state of existence and that even the devil himself has the opportunity to yet ascend to higher worlds. He was adamant that punishment is purely remedial and that, finally, every soul must be gathered home to the bosom of the divine Father.

Everyone, he believed – including the devil himself – will finally be saved and the empty hell would disappear for all time. He was eventually declared a heretic and excommunicated from the church.

Pope Gregory the Great (1073-1085) also favoured the idea of purgatory and it became widely accepted during the Middle Ages. It only, however, became an official article of faith in the Roman Catholic Church during the 15th Century AD as a result of the Council of Florence in 1439.

This doctrine, in fact, became one of the major factors leading to the Great Reformation when Martin Luther led a movement in protest at the extra-Biblical traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. His followers became known as “Protestants”.

Matters came to a head in the early 15th Century when Pope Leo X (1513-1521) needed vast sums of money to continue the building of St. Peter’s Church in Rome. He decided to sell “indulgences” which, he said, would speedily release poor suffering souls from hell.

A Dominican monk named Tetzel, a famous seller of these indulgences, openly advertised his wares at Wittenberg where Martin Luther lived. “No sooner will the money chink in the box, than the soul of the departed will be free”, he declared boldly.

Martin Luther was so incensed by this travesty of the Biblical doctrine of hell, that he nailed his famous “Ninety-five Theses” on the church door on All Saints’ Day, 1517.

Vast crowds gathered to read the famous document which emphatically laid down, among other things,

- (a) that an indulgence can never remit guilt, which God has kept in His own hand;
- (b) that it cannot remit divine punishment for sin; that also is in God’s hand alone;
- (c) it has no efficacy for souls in purgatory; and
- (d) the Christian who has true repentance has already received pardon from God, and needs no indulgence.

Copies were made in German and Latin and tens of thousands put into circulation all over Germany, beginning the conflict that was to usher in the Reformation and the return to pure Biblical doctrine by the Protestant movement.

The Bible is adamant that the road to heaven does not run through hell (a purgatory of suffering). Cleansing and preparation for heaven takes place in this life only when “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

Universalism goes far beyond purgatory and declares that all mankind, regardless of their faith or lack of it, will finally enter into an eternity of bliss.

They are strong believers in the “Fatherhood of God” and the “Brotherhood of Man” and look forward to an eternity in the Father’s Presence for all mankind.

Jesus Christ, Universalists teach, is the Saviour of the whole world – people just don’t know about it. Once they become informed, they will begin to enjoy the benefits of that salvation automatically.

The 9th Century AD Irish philosopher, John Scotus Erigena, took up the idea of a universal salvation for all mankind, but it was not until the 19th Century that it became a popular doctrine, due mainly to the influence of the German theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834).

Schleiermacher, called by some the “father of modern theology”, taught this view widely. He believed in the unity of the human race and was of the opinion that God would never treat some people differently to others. All would be saved in a universal homecoming at the end of time.

The doctrine of Universalism is becoming more and more accepted in some church circles as people move away from pure Bible teaching and lean heavily on human reasoning and philosophy.

H.S. Eeimarus, one of the pioneers of the German sceptical criticism of the New Testament, for example, says that he cannot accept a religion, which presents a way of salvation and, at the same time, implies that only a small proportion of humanity will be saved.

But is that not exactly what the Lord said would be the case as He pleaded with people to think again? “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult

is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:14).

If ever there is anyone qualified to make a statement about heaven and hell, then it is the Lord from Heaven! It is a wise person who listens carefully.

Universalism is rooted in pantheistic thinking, which teaches that man is of the same essence as God and, therefore, cannot be lost. Finally, we are told, the ever-evolving universe is moving towards the “omega” point when all creation will be brought into union with Christ and there will be a complete unity in the universe.

Contrast this with the warning of Jesus. “And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire; where ‘Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched’” (Mark 9:47- 48) .

There are various views on Universalism and the Protestant Church of the 20th Century is seeing a growing number of churchmen revert to this type of philosophical doctrine.

William Barclay, the beloved Scottish Bible Commentator, for example, claimed to be a convinced Universalist in his spiritual biography published just before his death. Other proponents of this theory include C.H. Dodd and Ethelbert Stauffer.

Karl Barth, a famous German theologian, did not teach universalism as such, but he said that God is sovereign and we mortals cannot and must not decide what God will or will not do in the end.

That is absolutely true! We need to take careful notice of what God has declared will happen to those who are not saved from the penalty, power and ultimately the presence of sin. Man’s philosophy will not change His mind.

Men may live without Christ, but it is certain that they dare not die without Him. There is no other remedy for sin.

The Bible teaches that, while Christ is potentially the Saviour of the whole world, He is actually the Saviour only of those who respond to His salvation by faith.

Michael Griffiths puts it this way. “The Cross is sufficient for all, but efficient only for those who will make the necessary response of repentance and faith – the Cross without faith is like a vaccine without a syringe.”

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom

of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” (I Corinthians 6:9,10).

It is very clear that all mankind will not enjoy the benefits of the eternal Kingdom of God. Though God is the creator of all, He is not the Father of all and the Lord shocked the people of His day by saying that.

Jesus listened to religious people around Him claiming to be followers of Abraham and benefactors of Heaven. He looked them straight in the eye and declared: “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” (John 8:44) Only those who are “born again” into the family of God will find their place in His Eternal Kingdom, He said emphatically. “Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3).

“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8)

If the Bible is to be believed, universalism’s hope was not the rich man’s experience. He opened his eyes in hell .. and he is still there awaiting the Great Day of Judgment when the Final Hell will be opened.

Just before His crucifixion, Jesus Christ spent some time praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. Was there another way to secure salvation for mankind? Was there any other way to deal with sin? Hear Him pray: “saying, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” (Luke 22:42).

If all mankind is to be saved ultimately in a universal cosmic salvation, why was it so vital that Christ should die?

The Bible gives us the answer, “knowing that you were not redeemed (purchased) with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” (I Peter 1:18-19). God’s Lamb paid the ultimate price and we reject that to our eternal cost.

“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,” Hebrews 10:26 (NKJV). And no further sacrifice for sin leaves us in the place where we will pay the debt of sin ourselves.

It is indeed a “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31)

This is not popular teaching and the Bible message has been rejected throughout the ages as men and women have raised all kinds of objections to the largely unspoken truth about hell.

The Rich Man still wishes he had not treated the subject of hell as a mere philosophy. If only he had taken it more seriously!

## **Chapter 10: HOW CAN A GOOD GOD SEND ANYONE TO HELL?**

*"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;*

*And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."* Luke 16:22-23 (KJV)

How can a good God send anyone to hell? The answer to that is – God does not voluntarily send people to hell! He has done everything He can to make it possible for every man, woman and child to ensure that their sins are forgiven and that they are spiritually prepared to enter Heaven.

Hell was never made for man and the Rich Man found out with a shock that it was his own choice – or maybe lack of choice! – that caused him to find himself in hell's holding cell, awaiting the Great Judgment Day.

Hell was made for the devil and his angels and human beings go there only because they refuse or neglect God's free offer of salvation.

It was the same in Noah's Day. That man of God preached faithfully for 120 years while he built the Ark. Anyone who believed God's Word and wanted to be saved from the coming destruction had an open invitation to board the Ark. Only eight got on board, including Noah. Everyone else died in the waters that covered the earth. Tragically, it was their own choice and they are still in shock as they await the Great White Throne Judgment in the company of the Rich Man.

Does God enjoy seeing men pay the ultimate penalty for sin? Absolutely not. That is why He pleads with men, women and children today. "For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies, says the Lord GOD. Therefore turn and live!" (Ezekiel 18:32).

The Holy God became our Saviour at great cost to heaven and the invitation to choose life is extended to all mankind. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16).

People who will not believe and repent, turning to the Lord for forgiveness and cleansing, will find that the Saviour must be their Judge on that great day.

Those who choose to emphasize only His great mercy at the expense of His holiness are in for a shock.

We live in an age that emphasizes the happiness and well-being of mankind. People, we are told, have a right to be happy and successful. Positive things like love, hope, peace, marriage enrichment, financial blessing and leadership potential should be emphasized, rather than negative preaching about being saved from hell.

It has been asked how Christians could possibly serve a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness as to inflict everlasting torture upon His creatures, however sinful they have been, accusing Him of being more like satan than God.

Nothing could be further from the truth. God Himself took on the form of human beings in order to pay the penalty of sin personally. There is nothing more He can do for those who refuse His wonderful offer of salvation.

Yet He still pleads with arrogant mankind through His servants. "Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'" (Ezekiel 33:11). Can you hear His heartbeat?

A loving God does not send a sinner to hell. It is a matter of personal choice where people spend eternity. The Rich Man knew that and he pleaded with Abraham to send someone to his family and persuade them to make that decision.

It is man's sin that puts him in jail, with his liberty taken away for months, years, or even life. It is sin that causes murders, breaks up homes, and brings disease, death and misery. It is man's sin that will ultimately rob him of the most precious future he could ever have wished for.

Someone once asked a little boy why he wanted to go to Sunday School and learn about a God who allowed wars to bring about untold misery to His creation. "If He is such a good God", the challenger asked, "then why does He not stop these senseless wars?"

"Why should He?" responded the boy. "He didn't start them, did He?"

Man is very quick to blame God for the consequences of His own sinful behaviour and choices.

Interestingly, there is no record of the Rich Man blaming God. Once away from the limitations of his earthly existence, he understood

perfectly that this was his destiny by choice. The Rich Man, at last, recognised that he was a sinner, but that recognition came too late for him.

William Temple, the famous Archbishop of Canterbury wrote: “How can there be a paradise for any while there is a hell for some?”

How can a mother enjoy paradise while her child is in hell? How can a father enjoy paradise while his beloved wife is in hell? How can anybody enjoy heaven while people are suffering such torment in the nether regions?

These are serious questions and none of our philosophising will answer them because we see things only from the subjectivity of earth. We have to understand that we will view things from a very different perspective in eternity.

Those in hell lose their status as human beings following the Judgment and, in ways that we do not understand now, their absence will not cause a void in heaven. When God wipes away our tears, it will be forever. “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4).

We have to see things from God’s perspective. As much as the Bible exults in the glories of heaven, even more does it warn of the horrors of hell. “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8).

It can be no other way. In the next world, inevitably, the sinner will reap what he has sown. Every poor, wicked, Christ-rejecting hell-deserving sinner will come to the place of torment reserved for those who will not repent and turn to Christ, and who will not be saved.

We cannot blame God for that any more than we can blame Him for the ruin and misery caused by man’s sin here on earth. All the tragedy, heartache, ruin and death we see around us are the fruits of sin and the results of man’s choices in his arrogant rejection of the principles of God’s Word.

God’s laws do not change. People go to hell because they are sinners. The torments of hell are the fruit of their sin. Hell is the place for sinners and people go to hell because they ought to go there.

Sinners who reject Christ deliberately choose evil instead of good. When they go to hell they continue in sin and, therefore, continue to



be punished. People go to hell because they deserve it — and they stay there for the same reason.

Eternal punishment continues because sin continues in hell. “He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.” (Revelation 22:11). Our choices here cement our future state.

This is one of the reasons suicide is such a dreadful choice. People believe they can escape the awfulness of their situation on earth, not realising that their choices are set in concrete in eternity. If they die without Christ and end up in hell, their situation will remain unchanged for eternity.

Hell has no fire escape. At least here on earth there is every chance that circumstances can change. Suicide forfeits that opportunity. People outside of Christ contemplating suicide should give this very serious thought.

Sadly, sometimes even Christians contemplate suicide without thinking about the fact that the God who may be trusted with their eternal destiny is worthy of being trusted with the details of this life. Those who truly belong to the Lord can never be lost, but it leaves a poor testimony. Suicide is not an option for Christians.

It is especially not an option for the unsaved. When people understand the seriousness of an eternity in Hell, suicide dare not be contemplated, unless they have determined to make hell their destiny.

W. Herschel Ford relates the story of a Hollywood actor who committed suicide with the full knowledge that he was not right with God. Since he found no joy in the empty life he lived, he wanted to end it all. This man had been involved in an argument with his wife before he shot her three times. He burned down their house and then killed himself. A note he left for a friend read: “George, forgive me, friend. I guess Connie meant more to me than I knew. I killed the only thing I ever loved. Give all our well-meaning friends my best, and tell them I’ll meet them in Hell.”

In life, Hell was a joking matter to him. In death, he knew there was certainly a Hell. If only he had stopped to think about the truth that he did not need to end up in a Christless eternity. How different his story might have been.

Death haunts mankind when they do not have a true faith in Christ. Poets, philosophers and other writers throughout the ages have sought

to explain, understand and cope with death.

Those who become obsessed with death are in a very serious situation. Unless they turn their face toward Heaven and seek the Lord, their depression will deepen to the point where the reality of Hell will not even deter them.

Ernest Hemingway, the famous author, could not get death out of his mind. His father, an intellectual, had killed himself when Hemingway was a young man and, as a result, Hemingway wanted to demonstrate to all humanity that he feared neither life nor death. Ironically, when he was sixty-one years old, he committed suicide in a moment of rage and human weakness.

W. Herschel Ford also tells the story of a young shepherd-boy in the North of Scotland. He noticed that the central column of a railway bridge spanning a deep ravine had been destroyed in a raging storm. He stood in the middle of the track and desperately waved his coat at an approaching train. The driver hooted furiously, but the boy refused to move off the track. Passengers were flung around as the brakes were suddenly applied. Unfortunately, the poor lad was killed. As everyone stared at the broken bridge, the driver walked over to the mangled body of the young man. "If he had not died for us we would all have perished today", he said.

Christ Jesus died for our sins and no one need go to Hell. That is why the Bible boldly declares "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:9-10)

There is no way the sinner may enter heaven. Nothing unclean or impure will be found in heaven. "But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." (Revelation 21:27)

The "Lamb's Book of Life" referred to so often in the Bible is the record of those men, women and children who have welcomed God's sacrifice for sin and received the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. This transaction of faith is called "being born again" in the Bible and happens when an individual personally receives Christ into their life in response to His call.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with

Me.” (Revelation 3:20)

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:” (John 1:12)

It is not so much a case of Heaven being an imperfect place if there is a hell, but Heaven being an imperfect place if there is no hell.

There is every reason to believe that in hell there is abandonment to wickedness such as is not possible on this earth. Away from the restraining influence of God’s presence - never again to hear a gospel sermon or song - forever in the presence of those who hate God, hell is not a fun place.

What a terrible future for the lost! Without hope in this world or the next, their only prospect is an existence of unmitigated pain, remorse and regret. Cultured, refined, good-living people who have rejected Christ will find themselves in the company of the vilest, most depraved, loathsome, degraded and vicious humans that ever walked on earth – forever.

Even the influence of respectability is totally lacking as people in hell give themselves over to unbridled sin forever. Wicked hearts, without restraint of any kind, will grow even more wicked as sinners themselves continue to make hell what it is.

No, God is completely just in His decision to allow those who will not be cleansed and made whole to be shut out of heaven. And without a state of limbo, hell is the only other choice of eternal residence.

God is a good and just God and His mercy is still extended freely to the “whosoever will come”. He knows just how bad hell is and His heart’s desire is that mankind will take advantage of His immensely kind offer of salvation.

The Rich Man had missed his opportunity forever. Now only further and deeper darkness loomed ahead without any hope of reprieve or escape. He had to tell his brothers!

## **Chapter 11: ETERNITY'S GREAT GULF**

*"And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

*And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."*

*Luke 16:24-26 (KJV)*

The Rich Man took a chance. He knew there was absolutely no possibility of leaving "hell's holding cell". He does not even consider pleading for mercy and another chance. All he wants now is some relief from his torment.

If God will no longer speak to him, perhaps Abraham will take pity and help him. Or even Lazarus. His life on earth was ever present in his mind and he did not need Abraham to remind him of it. He remembered perfectly well that he had not been of any help to Lazarus in his distress during those long years on earth, which seemed so short now in the light of eternity. He wished he could live his life again. Things would be so different.

Abraham shook his head sadly. Even if he or Lazarus wanted to help, there was no chance of that now. "There is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us".

This is an awesome truth from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. There is no communication with the dead in Sheol/Hades. No transmigration of the soul. Those held in the "holding cell" of Hell remain there until the Great Judgment Day.

There are people who disagree with the Bible on this point. They believe in contact with the spirits of the dead and do everything in their power to reach those "on the other side". This is known as "spiritism" and is expressly forbidden by God in His Word.

**"When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving**

you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations.  
10 “There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you.” (Deuteronomy 18:9-12 NKJV)

Spiritism poses as a universal, common denominator for all religious groups, teaching the continuity of life and the eternal progression of man towards perfection in the spirit realm. It is an ancient form of deception and one of the oldest of religious cults.

Spiritism is strictly forbidden by the Word of God and is, therefore, one of the deadliest of the cults where the certainty of Divine Judgment is concerned. (Lev. 19:13, 20:6, 27, Deut. 18:11, Isa. 8:19,20.)

People who claim to have this power of communication with the “dead” are commonly known today as MEDIUMS. (The King James Version of the Bible designates such persons as having “familiar spirits”). The basic principle of Spiritism is the foretelling of future events or the disclosure of hidden knowledge through pretended communication with the spirits of the dead. There is as yet no scientific “proof” of any communication with the dead (necromancy), in spite of the most determined efforts of its adherents.

A great deal of research has gone into spiritualism and other similar cults to find out if it is really true that the living and the dead can communicate. But in all the research on this subject, there has never been found one proven case in which they did.

The famous Houdini offered a vast sum of money to anyone who could prove otherwise and met with the most powerful mediums of his time to investigate their claims. None convinced him and he exposed many as frauds.

At the same time the Scientific American Magazine offered five thousand dollars to the first medium who could prove that they were genuine. Half of the money was to be given to the first medium that could present a proven case of psychic phenomena, such as table tipping or spirit writing produced by supernatural origin. The other half

was to be given to the medium that could present a proven case of psychic phenomenon, such as a trance communication, produced through the personality of the medium.

A lot of mediums showed interest, but when they learned that the world-famous Mr. Houdini was to be the head of the investigation committee, most of them withdrew. Houdini, considered the greatest authority of the time on so-called “magical arts”, had already exposed many of them as tricksters.

Despite all the efforts put forth by the mediums of the different nationalities who competed, not one case of spirit communication has been proved genuine. The five thousand dollars remains unclaimed.

After Houdini’s death, mediums claimed his spirit returned in their seances and made known to them that he had been wrong in his previous attitude towards spiritualism.

Mrs. Houdini was not convinced. She offered ten thousand dollars to any medium who could reproduce a message of ten words known only to her and Houdini. She never heard from them again – in spite of the claims of a popular modern film on Houdini’s life that portrays his return in spirit form.

The Science and Invention Magazine offered twenty-one thousand dollars for any trick or phenomenon that could not be reproduced by ordinary means.

The man at the head of the investigating committee, Mr. Joseph Dunninger, proved that he was able to reproduce and duplicate every trick the mediums submitted. In most cases, he was able to perform the same thing in about one- tenth of the time it took the medium fake to do it.

Trickery, often inspired by satanic power, is nothing new. In Moses’ day, Pharaoh’s magicians were able to “copycat” many of his supernatural signs – until God said “enough”.

“But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. And the gnats were on men and animals. The magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the LORD had said.” (Exodus 8:18-19 NIV)

Houdini, Herman, Blackstone, and others specialized in reproducing spiritistic phenomena and declared that any good magician could do it. Blackstone offered one thousand dollars to any medium who could do any psychic trick under darkness that he could not duplicate in the

light.

Two reporters from the Los Angeles daily newspaper were doing some investigation of their own. At the very first seance they attended, one of them expressed a desire to communicate with the spirit of her dead husband. Her companion asked to communicate with the spirit of his dead sister.

To their great surprise, they each had the opportunity of talking with the spirit of their loved ones – in spite of the fact that the young woman had never been married and her companion never had a sister.

Dr. John E. Purdon of Dublin University made some interesting observations after extensive psychic research. He measured the pulse beats of mediums and compared them to people in a condition of insanity. He said that the pulse variations of a terrible maniac were identical with those of a medium when fully in a trance. He concluded that this does in no way imply that the medium is insane while in a trance, but that it showed the medium had given up mental control.

When you think about it, it is inconceivable that the dead can be disturbed by the incantations of men and women .. or that the inhabitants of the realms of the dead (both in Hades and Heaven) would be subject to the caprice of mediums whose practices God thoroughly condemns.

At the same time, we must never forget that satan is able to transform himself into an “angel of light”, when necessary (2 Cor. 11:14), and has no qualms about impersonating the dead. Much spiritistic activity is very real – an indication of demonic power whose source is the Prince of Darkness himself.

Demon spirits can take the shape and form of the deceased, or merely imitate the voice and give a message, in order to delude and deceive humans and that is why the Bible strongly warns against dabbling in the occult. In fact, the Bible goes so far as to define spiritism as “...encouraging the activity of demons” (Galations 5:6-21 Living Bible).

Even its adherents admit that spiritism is beset with the gravest dangers, often resulting in moral degradation, madness and even death. Those who try to leave its clutches do not find freedom easily.

According to the National Spiritualist Association: “A Spiritualist is one who believes, as the basis of his or her religion, in the communication between this and the spirit world by means of mediumship, and who endeavours to mould his or her character and

conduct in accordance with the highest teachings derived from such communication”.

It's seven Principles embrace reincarnation and universalism and include the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of man, continuous existence, communion of spirits and ministry of angels, personal responsibility, compensation and retribution hereafter for good or evil done on earth and a path of endless progression.

In fact, they believe in everything that the Bible condemns and Jesus Christ spoke out against. It is no wonder their proponent's claim that Thomas Paine, a noted agnostic, is enjoying an eternity of bliss far greater than Jesus.

“Tom Paine is in the seventh sphere, one above our Lord, though he was so many centuries behind Him in entering into the spirit life” (Weisse).

That comment is especially interesting in the light of the record of his death. These were Thomas Paine's last words: “I would gladly give worlds, if I had them, if “The Age of Reason” had not been published. O Lord, help me. Christ, help me. Stay with me. It is hell to be left alone.”

Sir Conan Doyle, a famous medium, recognised that Christ spoke out against many of their practices. He said, however, that Christ was a superior sort of medium who, regrettably, “often lost His tongue”.

Jesus Christ is not popular in spiritistic circles and His Name is carefully omitted in all their services and in their prayers. Their motto is: “Every Man, his own Priest and His Own Saviour”.

Rev. Fielding, a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, made a very relevant comment when he said: “No one has the right to call himself a Christian unless he believes in the Divinity of Jesus Christ. He may be a person of estimable character and greatly developed spiritually, but he is not a Christian.”

Spiritists repeatedly attempt to prove that the Bible endorses Spiritism and claim that many biblical characters, including the apostles and the Lord Jesus Christ, were mediums and encouraged such practices.

They also believe in prophecy, clairvoyance (power of discerning objects not present to the senses), laying on of hands, healing, visions, trance revelations, raps, automatic writing and materialisation (ability of spirits to assume visible or concrete form).

“For those who believe, Spiritualism leads to God”. (Dr. Marcus



Bach).

“Spiritualism is the greatest revelation the world has ever known”.  
(Conan Doyle).

“Spiritualism is an outpouring of the Spirit upon humanity, a divine revelation from the spheres of light. It is the highest message of truth, which we have ... the great redeemer, the emancipator which releases human souls from the bondage of superstition and ignorance ..”  
(Spiritualist Manual Revision of 1940).

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Bible warns that spiritism leads away from God and puts one right on the pathway to Hell. (Deuteronomy 18:9-12).

In the light of Old and New Testament scriptures, it is very clear that anyone who dabbles in spiritism does so in direct disobedience to God’s plain command.

Spiritism has been practised for many centuries, in spite of God’s specific instructions to avoid contact with the spirit world. The Ancient Egyptians, for example, practised magic, sorcery and necromancy and used these powers to duplicate some of Moses’ miracles (Exod. 7:11,8:18).

Isaiah in the 8th Century BC accused the ancient spiritists of “casting sorceries upon Israel” (Isaiah 8:19, 19:3, 47:9). Daniel, the prophet, also came into contact with them in Babylon (Daniel 1:20, 2:2, 2:27, 4:7, 5:7).

King Saul, first king of Israel, under God’s command drove them out of his country — I Sam. 28:3,9 — but, sadly, later died for his decision to consult with the Witch of Endor (I Chron. 10:13,14). Later King Josiah expelled them as well (2 Kings 23:24,25). King Manasseh’s downfall was a result of his involvement with spiritism (2 Kings 21:6,2 Chron. 33:6.)

The ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Chaldeans and Canaanites all practised Spiritism and God told the Israelites that they were to avoid becoming involved in these types of practises at all costs. “The nations you replace all do these EVIL things, but the Lord your God will not permit you to do such things”. (Deut. 18:9-12. Living Bible). See also Lev. 19:26,20:27, Isa. 32:6, 47:13,14, Jer. 27:9,10, Zech. 10:2, Mal. 3:5.

The scriptures declare that those consorting with sorcerers are cursed by God and worthy only of death.

\* “You shall not permit a sorceress to live.” (Exodus 22:18).

\* “A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones.Their

blood shall be upon them.” (Leviticus 20:27).

\* "Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 19:31).

\* “And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people.” (Leviticus 20:6).

The New Testament is just as strong in its condemnation of those who try to communicate across the Great Gulf.

Witchcraft (sorcery/magical arts) is condemned as being evidence of the “works of the flesh” (Galations 5:20). Those who do not repent and turn away from it will find themselves in a very serious situation. “And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.” (Revelation 9:21)

The Bible is clear. The sorcerer shall not enter into heaven. “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8)

There is a great gulf between the living and the dead and those who attempt to cross it set themselves up for deception.

In these “last days” before the Return of the Lord to earth, the Bible warns that many shall abandon the faith “giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons” (I Tim. 5:1,2) and that, unfortunately, is what happened to

Dives. He believed a lie and now he is cut off from the Lord of Glory forever by his own choice.

Elymas, the Sorcerer, an acquaintance of Paul the Apostle, practised “the craft” and Paul did not mince his words. “You son of the devil ...will you never end YOUR OPPOSITION to the Lord?” (Acts 13:1-1). See also Acts 8:9ff, Acts 16:1ff, Acts 19:19, 2 Tim. 3:8, Rev. 22:15, Gal. 5:16ff.

The Lord Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry had no desire whatsoever to consort with demon spirits. Wherever and whenever He came across them, He cast them out and bound their power.

While spiritism is a very old delusion, its modern revival is reputed to have begun with the FOX SISTERS on the 31st March 1848, when their family moved to Hydesville, New York.

Margaret and Kate Fox, the two youngest daughters of the family of

six children, developed into mediums and claimed to have worked out a code of communication with the author of strange rappings heard in the house. These are known as “The Rochester Rappings” and the Fox cottage is today a shrine of this movement. Much publicity was given to these “rappings” and the movement developed and spread far and wide.

Spiritism makes its strongest appeal to those who have suffered great loss because of its offer of contact with, and information from, beings beyond the grave.

The saddest thing about spiritism is that it draws people away from the only Mediator between man and God, the Lord Jesus Christ. While promising there is no hell, it is the very gateway to hell. “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation... ?” (Heb. 2:3).

The Rich Man has had firsthand experience with demons for many years now. If he could return to earth, he would do everything in his power to turn people away from anything that would lead them into hell.

It was too late for him, but not too late for his brothers. Hell was so dreadful it was beyond description. How could he let them know?

He could not go back and he pleaded with Abraham to find a way to warn them.

## **Chapter 12: HOW TO STAY OUT OF HELL**

*"Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Luke 16:27-28 (KJV)*

The Rich Man was absolutely traumatised. He could never have imagined just how terrible hell was, even in his worst nightmares. That he was conscious and aware was beyond doubt. He could remember life on earth so clearly and the many opportunities he had been given to make his peace with God.

His thoughts turned to his five brothers. Hell to them was as irrelevant as it had been to him. They also believed they would be going right into the Presence of God. It was their right as Jews and they were going on their merry way enjoying life, without too much thought on eternal matters.

Dives knew just how wrong they were. Now at last he was convinced of the reality of hell and the urgent need to have your sins forgiven on earth. He had to get this message to his brothers! He had to tell them how to stay out of hell.

It was too late for him, but there was still a chance for them. "I beg you, therefore, father," he pleaded with Abraham, "that you would send him to my father's house".

He was so desperate to share the Gospel with his brothers that he wanted Lazarus to leave Heaven and return to earth with the eternal message of salvation. But, even if Lazarus was willing, the Great Eternal Divide prevented that. "It is appointed for men to die once ..." (Hebrews 9:27) – there is no going back. Death, as we call it on earth, is the final gateway to our destiny for eternity.

The Rich Man had woken up to the most important and essential truth that every human being should know – it is only acceptance of the Gospel that will enable a person to stay out of hell.

The Bible tells us that God had planned man's salvation from the beginning of time. Thousands of prophecies in the Bible testified to the coming of the Messiah, who would personally pay the price for sin with His own blood.

For thousands of years, God allowed Israel to sacrifice animals as an

object lesson, demonstrating the truth that “The Lamb of God” would shed His blood once and for all to atone for the sin of mankind.

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” — Mark 10:45.

He came to pay the price for sin and to open the Door of Heaven for those who are cleansed by the blood. He came as man’s substitute and satisfied the need of justice. Sin has to be judged and punished and Isaiah, an 8th Century BC prophet, spoke of these things eight hundred years before the birth of Christ, prophesying in detail His birth, death and resurrection.

**“13 See, my servant will prosper; he will be highly exalted. 14 Many were amazed when they saw him — beaten and bloodied, so disfigured one would scarcely know he was a person. 15 And he will again startle? many nations. Kings will stand speechless in his presence. For they will see what they had not previously been told about; they will understand what they had not heard about.**

**I Who has believed our message? To whom will the LORD reveal his saving power? 2 My servant grew up in the LORD’S presence like a tender green shoot, sprouting from a root in dry and sterile ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. 3 He was despised and rejected — a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way when he went by. He was despised, and we did not care.**

**4 Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God for his own sins! 5 But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed! 6 All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the guilt and sins of us all.**

**7 He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. 8 From prison and trial they led him away to his death. But who among the people realized that he was dying for their sins — that he was suffering their punishment? 9 He had done no wrong, and he never deceived anyone But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man’s**

grave.

10 But it was the LORD'S good plan to crush him and fill him with grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have a multitude of children, many heirs. He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD'S plan will prosper in his hands.

11 When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of what he has experienced, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins. 12 I will give him the honors of one who is mighty and great, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among those who were sinners. He bore the sins of many and interceded for sinners." ( Isaiah 52:13 – Isaiah 53:12 NLT)

The Rich Man had heard these words read in the local synagogues many times – and so had his brothers – but none of them had believed.

An Ethiopian Eunuch riding in the deserts of Judea eight hundred years after Isaiah also read them as he was travelling along, but this man wanted to know whom the prophet was speaking about. The difference was that this man was spiritually hungry and he asked a Christian evangelist named Philip to explain this scripture to him.

Here is the account from the New Testament:

"26 As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, "Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza." 27 So he did, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah. 29 The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and walk along beside the carriage." 30 Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah; so he asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 The man replied, "How can I, when there is no one to instruct me?" And he begged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him. 32 The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this:

"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.

And as a lamb is silent before the shearers,

He did not open his mouth.

33 He was humiliated and received no justice.

Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth."

34 The eunuch asked Philip, “Was Isaiah talking about himself or someone else?” 35 So Philip began with this same Scripture and then used many others to tell him the Good News about Jesus. 36 As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look! There’s some water! Why can’t I be baptized?” “You can,” Philip answered, “if you believe with all your heart.” And the eunuch replied “I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.” 38 He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.” (Acts 8:26 – 8:38 NLT)

Dives had been far too busy making money to think about such serious things. Those Bible texts were fine for the learned men with great beards, but life was for living and time was money. How he regrets that attitude to this day.

“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Mark 8:36)

The most serious thing of all is to prepare for eternity and that was what he desperately wanted his brothers to do now. They must not, under any circumstances, come to this place.

A modern day sceptic understood the seriousness of hell. He said that the reason he was not a Christian was because he did not think Christians really believed the Bible. “Sir, if I believed what you, and the Church of God, say you believe, even if England were covered in broken glass from coast to coast, I would walk over it, if need be on my hands and knees, and think it worthwhile living just to save one soul from an eternal hell like that”. (Attributed to ‘Charlie’ Peace (convicted murder in conversation with the chaplain in Leeds gaol, before being hanged.)

Another sceptic wrote: “Did I firmly believe, as millions say they do, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life influences destiny in another, religion would mean to me everything. I would cast away earthly enjoyment as dross, earthly cares as follies, and earthly thoughts and feelings as vanity. Religion would be my first waking thought, and my last image before sleep sank into unconsciousness. I would labour in its cause alone, I would take thought for the morrow of Eternity only. I would esteem one soul gained for Heaven worth a life of suffering. Earthly consequences should never stay my hand, nor seal my lips. Earth, its joys and griefs, would occupy no moment in my thoughts. I would strive to look upon Eternity alone, and on the immortal souls around me, soon to be everlastingly happy or

everlastingly miserable. I would go forth to the world and preach to it in season and out of season, and my test would be, “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.”

“Then I saw there was a way to Hell, even from the Gates of heaven ...” (Bunyan of Bedford “Pilgrim’s Progress”).

“In today’s church there’s no urgency to evangelise partly because we don’t deeply believe the lost are really lost,” says Luis Paulau in his book “The Only Hope for America”. “We don’t out-and-out deny it because that would sound heretical, but we don’t embrace it because if we did, we’d be much more desperate to persuade lost and dying people to turn to Jesus Christ.”

Jonathan Edwards felt that urgency. He said: “If I knew there was one person, and but one, of those that we know, that was to be the subject of this misery (an eternal hell) what an awful thing it would be to think of.”

John Wesley had a heart that burned for the lost. In a letter to John Smith, he wrote: “Whenever I see one or a thousand men running to hell, be it in England, Ireland, or France, yea, in Europe, Asia, Africa or America, I will stop them if I can; as a minister of Christ, I will beseech them in His Name, to turn back and be reconciled to God.”

In “Evangelism That Works”, George Barna tells about hearing a Bill Hybels sermon on the rich man and Lazarus and how he was deeply moved by the Rich Man’s passionate plea for someone to tell his brothers. “To this day, more than a decade later”, Barna writes, “I recall that lesson and the horror that filled me as I realised, perhaps for the first time, how horrific a life in hell would be, how significant the death of Christ had been for me and just how imperative it is to use every resource available to share the real truth about life, death, sin and grace with every person I know.”

William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, said that he believed the principle dangers of the 20th century would be:

“A religion without the Holy Spirit, Christians without Christ, Forgiveness without repentance, Salvation without regeneration, Politics without God, and A heaven without a hell.”

C.S. Lewis made a most perceptive remark when he said this: “The damned are, in one sense, successful rebels to the end;... the doors of hell are locked on the inside.”

“Hell is God’s great compliment to the reality of human freedom and the dignity of human choice”, agrees G.K. Chesterton.



The Rich Man had missed his chance. His brothers would have to make their own decision about their future destinies. Lazarus would not be going back. If they missed heaven and joined their brother in hell, it would be in spite of - and not because of — God. It is the hardness and stubbornness of unrepentant hearts that keeps people out of heaven.

“But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed” (Rom. 2:5 NLT)

“I think the most amazing thing ... is to realise that in order to perish, i.e. to go to hell, you must resist the pleas of a loving God,” writes Ray C. Stedman. “God never damns anyone to hell without a chance. Don’t ever let anyone tell you the Bible teaches that ... Rather, it teaches that no one, not one person, will end up separated from God who has not personally resisted the claim and appeal of a loving God who sought to reach them.”

God does not want anyone to be lost and the reason the world has not ended yet and Christ has not returned as He promised is to give men, women and children time to repent and believe the Gospel. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9 NLT)

God has not left them without specific instructions, Abraham reminded Dives. They have the written Word of God to show them the way to heaven.

## **Chapter 13: CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?**

*“Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them’.*

*(Luke 16:29)*

There are so many books and philosophies claiming to show the way to an eternity in the Presence of God, how can we be sure that the Scriptures are right. Can we trust the Bible?

Abraham thought so. More than that, he knew so! He had already experienced the truth of God’s Word ... and so had Lazarus. The Rich Man had disregarded the Bible’s message, and now he too knew it was true. But too late.

“They have Moses and the prophets”, said Abraham, referring to the Old Testament. The New Testament had not yet been written when Jesus shared the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus with his generation.

The Bible has always been held in very high esteem by God’s people and is ignored or neglected to their eternal detriment. As much as our physical body needs nourishment, so our spirit/soul needs to be fed and the Lord Jesus Christ said that it is God’s Word alone that can do that. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4).

Not only is this amazing Book (and more than a mere “book”) the world’s bestseller, loved by Christians and held in superstitious awe by some, but it claims to be the only source of knowledge concerning God. No other book is quite like it, claiming God as the direct Author. The Bible says that God Himself superintended and directed the writing of it, the human authors being so under His control that their writing was of God.

2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that it was “God- breathed” (inspired) through the minds of men. It does not contain the gropings of fallible man after Truth, but is itself the Truth. It is the gradual unfolding of God’s plan and purpose, revealed to men by His Spirit, and can only properly be interpreted with the assistance of the Spirit of God.

“For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:21)

That is not hard to believe when one considers it’s supernatural origins. Imagine meeting with a group of friends and agreeing to write a

book. At the same time, agreeing that the project would not be discussed in any way. No one would know the theme, the literature style, the characters involved or the story line. Each individual would be required to write a chapter and the group would meet again in one year's time to put the book together and publish it. Can you imagine what the result would be? I am sure everyone would agree that a reasonably logical book would be a miracle!

Think about this! The Bible was written over a period of 1700 years from the time of Moses in BC 1600 to the writers of the New Testament in the first century AD.

35/40 different human authors wrote portions of it. Some wrote in Hebrew. Others wrote in Aramaic and Greek. They lived in different times and places across the centuries, in places as far apart as Palestine, Rome, Israel and Babylon.

There were no fax machines, or even email, to compare notes. Many of the writers were totally unaware of the existence of their fellow authors. Few were privileged to read any of the manuscripts at all. Many lived in different centuries and came from different cultures. All experienced the touch of God as they wrote.

The writers came from vastly different backgrounds and wrote in various styles — poetry, prose, history, architecture, biographies, drama, preaching. Some were shepherds, doctors, and fisherman. Others were prophets, priests and kings. Educated and “unlearned” authors wrote as they were inspired and motivated by the Spirit of God.

Yet as one reads the Bible, an impression of unity prevails. It is not a potpourri of philosophy that has become outdated over the centuries. The proof of its Divine Inspiration shouts from every page.

The Bible has a unity of spiritual purpose and one theme from Genesis to Revelation. “... the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:15).

That is why Abraham told the Rich Man that the scriptures were all his brothers needed to show them the way. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,” (2 Timothy 3:16).

People have tried through the ages to discredit the Bible, but without success. It is still changing lives with its God-given message.

Of course, there are problems and difficulties with translations of the original text, but as Professor Hort, an eminent Bible Scholar points

out, it is without genuine contradiction. "Not more an 1/1000th part of the whole is affected by differences ... whole Hebrew Manuscripts of the Old Testament show even less variation still. In no case is any doctrine of the faith affected in the slightest way by these variations."

All the Old Testament and New Testament books (except for any copyist's errors and mistranslations) are substantially as the Spirit of God intended.

The Bible has stood the test of time as science has challenged it and then confirmed it again and again.

Although not a scientific book written in scientific language, it is absolutely scientifically accurate and reliable.

Long before men understood these things, the Bible declared that the world was round (Isa. 40:21, 22), its interior a place of fire (Job 38:5) and that the earth was suspended in space. Jeremiah wrote about the fact that the stars are innumerable and cannot be counted (Jer. 15:5, 33:22).

The testimony of history is just as powerful as archaeology confirms its historical accuracy. The great flood of Genesis chapter 6 in Noah's Day is one such example. Ancient nations, whose very existence was doubted, have been proved to have lived at the time and place the Bible sets them. One such example is the Hittites.

Some customs that have been lost for centuries have also been confirmed such as the giving of a sandal in confirmation of a contract. Boaz is recorded to have done this in Ruth 4:7 and people wondered why until archaeology explained it.

One of the greatest proofs of Biblical accuracy is the testimony of prophecy. The Bible's incredible accuracy has shaken sceptics, some of whom have tried to say that the original writers could not possibly have written what they did. Others must have written it later after the event, and then put famous people's names to their backdated prophecies they insist. Of course, archaeology has proven beyond doubt that many of the manuscripts were written thousands of years ago and comparisons of various copies have left no doubt about its accuracy.

For example, the birth, life, crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ were prophesied in detail nearly 500 years before the event, including the exact place of His birth. "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting." (Micah 5:2).

Daniel also prophesied the exact time of Messiah's birth and ministry (Daniel 9:24-27). The Jews would return from Exile in Babylon, he said, and exactly 483 years later Messiah would come.

Daniel used a Jewish expression "Sharau" which means "seven weeks of years", prophesying that "69 weeks" (Sharau) would follow a pronouncement that Jerusalem was to be restored. "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks (69 weeks); The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times" (Dan. 9:25).

Exactly as prophesied this command was given by King Artaxerxes in the Month of Nisan BC 445 during the time of Nehemiah and Ezra, who were instrumental in helping with the rebuilding and restoration of Jerusalem.

Bearing in mind that the Jewish year consists of 360 days, exactly 69 "weeks" — or 483 years — later on Nisan 10 Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling yet another Old Testament prophecy (Zech. 9:9).

**"All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 5 'Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.'"** 6 So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. 7 They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. 8 And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!'" (Matthew 21:4-9)

Daniel goes on to describe Messiah's death, resurrection and second coming during the time of the final world government with some specific details about antichrist's reign.

What an amazingly accurate prophetic book the Bible is. Can it be trusted to tell the truth about Hell? Most certainly.

The rise and fall of various nations are prophesied in detail, as well as the return of the Jews to Israel in the "latter days" (e.g. Deut. 28:63-65). For thousands of years the prophecies concerning Jerusalem remained unfulfilled. It did not look as if she would ever again be the

capital city of a Nation called Israel. The Jews were scattered all over the world – again, as prophesied – until God’s prophetic timetable called them back to Israel and the nation was born in 1948.

There are so many thousands of prophecies – fulfilled and some as yet unfulfilled – that it would take a library of books to comment on them!

Of particular interest to us, particularly in these days, are the clear prophecies concerning the end times.

The books of Daniel, Ezekiel and Isaiah (Old Testament) and Revelation (New Testament), in particular, give specific detail about the nations.

Daniel lived during the time of the Babylonian conquest of Israel in the 6th Century BC. God showed him in detail what world history would be like and he wrote it down. The Lord even told him the names of the nations that were to take dominance of world history over the next few thousand years.

Daniel had two visions confirming a vision the Lord had given King Nebuchnezzar earlier. All three visions depict in visual form exact detail of world history until the end of this world, as we know it. The prophecies are so precise that the supernatural inspiration of the Bible cannot be doubted.

What did Daniel see and record?

The book of Daniel, chapters 7-9, gives us the details of four world empires that would rule the world until the end of its history. We do not have to guess their identity as Daniel records that an angel was sent from God to give him this information, which he recorded for posterity.

Let’s take a look at the three visions and the interpretation given by the angel, recorded in Daniel 8:15-27.

## **FIVE WORLD EMPIRES**

Nebuchadnezzar had seen, in vision, a huge statue with five specific elements (Daniel 2:1- 2:45). It had a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron and feet partly of iron and partly of clay. As the king watched, the statue was completely destroyed by “a stone cut out with hands”.

Daniel told the king that the Lord had revealed the secret of the statue to him in a night vision (2:19). The head represented Babylon. “You are this head of gold”, he told the king.

Two kingdoms, both inferior to Babylon, would dominate the world,

before a third kingdom — represented as iron — would arise. A revival of this kingdom would result in a powerful end-time world power made up of a number of nations, represented by the ten toes of the statue.

“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed” (Dan. 2:44) as the Lord takes back rulership of this earth.

Who are these kingdoms or world empires? Did they take dominance historically?

Daniel had two personal visions in which God confirmed this prophecy and gave him further specific details, even naming the world powers.

In the first vision he saw four beasts (Daniel chapter 7). One was like a lion, with eagles’ wings. The second beast looked like a bear. The third was like a leopard with four wings and four heads. The fourth beast was most terrifying of them all. As he watched it, he noticed it had ten horns. Suddenly another horn grew on its head and became very dominant, powerful and pompous. He was stunned by what he saw and very puzzled.

Later he had a similar vision. This time he saw a ram with two horns, one higher than the other. The ram pushed westward, southward and northward and became very great. As he was watching, a male goat came from the west and conquered the ram. He had a very large horn on his head, which was broken suddenly and four notable horns grew in its place. Out of one of them grew a little horn “which grew exceedingly great” and became dominant in the south, the east and Israel.

Daniel could not even begin to guess what this was all about and the Lord sent an angel to interpret his visions. (Dan. 8:15-27).

The first beast — the lion with eagle’s wings — he knew, represented Babylon. Corresponding to the statue’s head of gold, it was the kingdom in power at the time.

The next world empire to arise was that of the Medes and the Persians represented by the ram with two horns in Daniel’s second vision. (Corresponding to the bear of his first vision and the chest of arms and silver of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue).

Daniel, no doubt, knew about their existence and may well have heard rumblings of their warlike threats against Babylon. He was living in Babylon the night they attacked and conquered the empire. Daniel went into exile with the assurance that this world power would be

conquered in its turn. He even knew the name of its conqueror, though it was far from being a world power at that time! Who would have guessed that the small and insignificant Greek state known as Macedonia would rise to such great power and prestige?

The angel told him plainly that the male goat (corresponding to the leopard of his first vision and the statue's belly and thighs of bronze) was the kingdom of Greece. "The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power" (Dan. 8:20-22).

This description accurately predicted the conquest of the Persian Empire by Alexander and his armies, which brought to a close more than two hundred years of the illustrious political power under the Persians. Alexander the Great, represented by the ram's horn, died in a drunken feast at the pinnacle of his power at a young age and his kingdom was divided amongst four generals.

The fourth world empire, symbolised by the beast with ten horns (and the legs of the statue) represented the Roman Empire, one of the most powerful empires of all time.

The powerful "little horn" (corresponding to the beast with ten horns and the ten toes of the statue) represents the end time revival of the Roman Empire, finally headed up by a very powerful world leader called "the antichrist" in the Bible.

World history has followed Daniel's prophecies with precision and even now we are witnessing the growing power of the European nations. Geographically the ancient Roman Empire at the height of its power extended from the Euphrates River to the east across Northern Africa and Southern Europe, and included a portion of Britain.

The prophetic expectation is that geographically it will go through three stages. First, there will appear a confederacy of ten kingdoms within the borders of the ancient Roman Empire, which will constitute the first phase of its revival. Secondly, a strong man will appear and take dominance. He will consolidate these ten nations into a united kingdom and probably extend its border in various directions. Third is the final state of the Roman Empire when its power extends to the entire earth, finally to be totally destroyed at the time of the Second Coming of Christ.



These exciting detailed prophecies confirm that the Bible is a supernaturally inspired book and to be trusted.

The Bible is very specific

Abraham was sure that the Rich Man's brothers would find salvation if they would just take the trouble to search the scriptures and heed its message.

The Rich Man knew his brothers and he didn't hold out much hope that they would pause in the mad pursuit of life to study the scriptures.

Again he pleaded: "Please send Lazarus!" Something as supernatural as someone coming back from the dead should convince them. It was imperative that they did not go to hell. The lostness, the darkness, the pain, total separation from God and all that is good .. and the future that included the Great White Throne Judgment and the opening of Hell proper (Gehenna) was terrifying. It was far, far worse than anything he could ever have imagined. Even far worse than the language of earth could depict it or the most fiery of all God's prophets.

The Bible was truth! And his brothers stood in danger of going the same way in their arrogant disregard of the Word of God.

Please do something! Please do something! That was all he could think about.

## **Chapter 14: WHO IS THIS MAN JESUS?**

*"And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."*

*Luke 16:30-31 (KJV)*

The Rich Man was convinced that a supernatural miracle would persuade his brothers to think again. If someone came back from the dead, then surely they would believe. Abraham had to understand that and send Lazarus.

He was still not convinced that the Word of God was true and accurate and the last word on eternal matters. If he did not accept the Great Gulf was impassable, he reasoned, then Heaven had to bow to his will. On earth his thoughts and belief system had always taken precedence over the Word of God. This man still had the same heart. Regardless of the spiritual rules set in place by God Himself, Lazarus had to go back to earth and persuade his brothers.

While on earth, Dives had mocked those who spoke to him of the importance of making sure he was ready to go to heaven. He didn't even believe in hell and he was not prepared to listen. Besides, religion is a personal thing and who had the right to judge him? He knew his brothers still felt the same way. He also knew they were wrong and totally unprepared for eternity. He wished believers had persisted, in spite of his disinterest, and forced him to think again. It was by far better to be scared into heaven, than left to rot in hell.

In spite of his newfound zeal for evangelism, however, he could change nothing. Those who have passed to the other side are there for eternity and the "great gulf" precludes contact with the spirit world.

In any case, Abraham reminded him, miracles and the supernatural may shake a person but they cannot make him repent. Even if someone did go back from the dead, people would still not believe with their hearts. They may rationalise it, or say they believed it, but it would do nothing to change their lives. Only knowledge of their sinful lost state can bring about true repentance as they respond to the wooing of the Spirit of God.

Even as Jesus was telling the story, He knew that it was true. Soon

He would die on the Cross for the sin of mankind. Not only that, but He would return from the dead and still people would not believe. Those who repented and received Him as Saviour would find life and peace, but the vast majority of mankind would not be impressed. No, miracles don't often change lives.

Many soldiers during the Second World War have shared stories of close calls when they called on the Risen Lord for help, promising to serve Him if they were delivered. Incredible testimonies of miraculous deliverances come from their lips, but few have fulfilled their promises.

How many people have been healed, or seen family members healed, in answer to prayer and are still not serving the Lord of Glory? The Rich Man's brothers were no different and Dives knew that in his heart.

He had heard of many miracles. Moses and the phenomenal crossing of the Red Sea was something he knew about from childhood. He believed in God, but it did him no good at all. Even the devils believe in God because they know, even more so than men, that He is alive.

Believing with the intellect (the head) is not enough. We have to believe with our hearts and that was what the Rich Man had begun to realise. It's the difference between mental assent and committal.

The story is told of the famous Blondin who made crowds gasp and applaud when he walked over Niagara Falls on a tightrope. Few feats of daring had been seen to compare to it. He was hailed as the "Conqueror of Niagara". One day he turned to the crowds: "How many believe I can carry a man across in my wheelbarrow?" he challenged them. "Oh yes", they responded clapping heartily, "we know you can do it!"

They believed it ... but no-one was prepared to accept his challenge and climb in the wheelbarrow! Real belief has the element of committal and that is what the Rich Man realised .. too late.

Jesus Christ has risen! But is it true? Who is this Man, Jesus?

## **WHO IS THIS MAN JESUS?**

The Lord Jesus Christ put a question to His disciples one day during His three-and-a-half years of ministry on earth:

"Who do men say that I am?"

(Mark 8:27)

This is one of the most important questions that every individual upon the face of the earth has to answer personally. Our answer affects

our eternal destiny because the Person of Christ is the focal point of Biblical Faith, If He is not True God of True God then our faith is in vain for only the sinless God Himself could atone for sin. Without a clear understanding and a genuine faith as to who Jesus really is, salvation can never be experienced.

As someone once put it so aptly: either Jesus Christ was who He claimed to be – DIVINE – or He was a deliberate DECEIVER or, at best, DELUDED.

Who did men say He was? “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets,” responded the disciples. (Matthew 16:14).

People still have all manner of views concerning Christ. Some believe He was only a good teacher, others say He was a good Example. Some declare Him to be an impostor and there are even some who doubt that He ever walked on this earth.

The Bible is very clear as to His identity. Jesus Christ is Lord. Isaiah the prophet, speaking 800 years before His birth said this about Him:

**“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6)**

The Bible tells us plainly that a Day is coming when everyone who has ever lived will acknowledge the Lordship of Christ. “.. that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:10,11 TLB).

Jesus listened patiently – and then surprised them with a very personal question. “But who do you say that I am?” He asked His disciples. (Matthew 16:15).

Peter’s answer was swift, confident and to the point. “Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus Christ responded to that affirmation of faith by declaring it to be a direct revelation to Peter. “Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 16:16,17)

The testimony of the scriptures, the Father, human friends and acquaintances and the spirit world all agree with the testimony of Jesus

that He is “The Lord from Heaven”. (I Cor. 15:47).

## **THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST**

In these days of “interfaith” and the build-up to the prophesied “one-world religious system”, the Divinity of Christ is one of the most challenged truths of our day.

While men are willing to accept almost anyone or anything as God, they balk at bowing the knee to Jesus and reject the only way to escape hell.

Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Divine Trinity, is indeed God. He is not just like God, but He is God in the full and absolute sense of the term according to the Bible which declares that “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”, i.e. in human form (Colossians 2:9).

That is why Christ could say with such absolute conviction: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6).

The Early Church believed and confirmed this truth emphatically. “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other Name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12).

The knowledge of WHO CHRIST IS is vital to the reality of our faith. Only GOD HIMSELF could pay the price for sin – no other created being is totally perfect. If Christ is not God, then our salvation is not real and we are still in our sin. That is how important this doctrine is.

A “great teacher” or an ideal “example” is not sufficient to provide salvation from sin. The Bible presents ONE Who can save because of WHO He is – Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world.

Further ... If Christ is not God, and men worship Him – they become idolaters and blasphemers of the worst kind for the Bible commands us to “Worship God” alone (Rev. 19:10).

But if He is God, and men do not worship Him – they are without hope in this world or the next. Men may attempt to live without Christ, but they dare not die without Him. The scriptures are very clear as to the true identity of Jesus.

## **HE HAS THE NATURE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD**

He is everything that God claims to be. Nothing else in creation shares these qualities and characteristics that belong to God alone.

He is Eternal. He claimed to be the ever present Eternal God. “Jesus

said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” (John 8:58).

“I AM” is the special Name God used when He revealed Himself to Moses. “And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:14). It means the ever-present self-existent One – Jehovah.

The Jews were so incensed at His use of that Name that they attempted to stone Him for blasphemy. They knew exactly Who He was claiming to be. “Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” (John 8:59).

He is the unchanging One – “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8).

He is Omniscient (All-Knowing). The disciples were so awed by His supernatural knowledge that they testified: “Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.” (John 16:30).

He is Omnipotent (All-Powerful). “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (Matthew 28:18). He did not just say that, but He proved it and His disciples watched His life in awe, proclaiming: “Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!” (Luke 8:25).

He is Omnipresent (All-Present). “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them”, He assured His followers and we are still experiencing the reality of that to this day. (Matthew 18:20).

Isaiah had a wonderful vision of God and the Bible tells us that He actually saw the preincarnate Christ (Jesus before He took on a human body that first Christmas). “These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.” (John 12:41). Read Isaiah 6:1-6 for more details of that vision.

## **HE HAS THE NAMES OF GOD**

Few people realise that the Father called the Son “God” without ambiguity. “But to the Son He says: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your Kingdom.” (Hebrews 1:8). “Let all the angels of God worship Him” He commanded. (Hebrews 1:6).

The Bible declares plainly that Jesus Christ is God, eternally present with the Father and the Holy Spirit. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1). (Compare John 20:28, Titus 2:13).

It is not only the angels that are made to worship the Lord. People are created for His Glory too. That came home to Thomas, the apostle, when he saw Jesus after His resurrection. He wanted hard evidence before he believed, he told the other disciples. At the very least he wanted to touch the nail scars and examine the wound in Jesus’ side to make sure it was really Him. But when He saw Jesus all unbelief melted away. “And Thomas answered and said to Him, My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28).

### **HE CLAIMED TO BE GOD**

He was so clear about His claim to be God that the people of His generation often attempted to stone Him for blasphemy. As we have seen, He had no qualms about using the special Name for God – “I AM”, i.e. the Ever Present God – usually translated “Jehovah” or Yahweh. It was considered such a holy Name that the Jews used a new pen every time they wrote it.

“I and My Father are one”, He declared – one in essence, as well as unity and purpose. (John 10:30).

Philip, an early disciple, longed to see God for Himself and Jesus turned to him one day and spoke these words: “Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (John 14:9).

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.” (I Timothy 3:16).

### **HE DID THE WORKS OF GOD**

Jesus not only claimed to be God, but He backed it up by His lifestyle and the scriptures confirm His claims.

Who created the world? The Bible declares that the Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the Creator and Sustainer of all things. “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All

things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist (hold together).” (Colossians 1:16,17). (Compare Heb. 1:2, John 1:1-3).

Who but God can forgive sins? Jesus stunned His generation with evidence so they could see and understand that He had the power to do just that. “But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”; then He said to the paralytic, “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.”” (Matthew 9:6). (Compare Mark 2:1-12).

Who is going to be the Judge of all mankind and the Nations at the Great White Throne Judgment? The Rich Man and countless others are awaiting that Day in hell’s holding cell and the future fills them with terror.

Who is the great Judge? None other but Jesus! “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,” (John 5:22) ...“... the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:” (2 Timothy 4:1). (Compare Matt, chapter 25, Acts 17:31).

Those who knew him testified that He was divine. At His baptism and transfiguration, when the Glory of the Lord surrounded Him, those with Him heard the Father declare, “This is My Beloved Son” (Matt. 3:13-17, Luke 3:22, Matt. 17:5, Luke 9:35, John 12:27,28).

His friends acknowledged that He was God. Peter said: “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matt. 18:16). Thomas, a former sceptic fell down in worship, declaring: “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

Even His enemies were awed by their experience of Him. The Centurion on duty at the cross that day cried out: “Truly, this was the Son of God” (Matt. 27:54).

The angels worship Him, crying out “You are worthy” (Rev. 5:8,9,12) and even the demons grudgingly acknowledge that He is God. “And he cried out with a loud voice and said, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me.” (Mark 5:7).

No wonder Jesus demanded extraordinary devotion from men, women and children. “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” (Matthew 10:37).

Yes, the One Who took on human form and paid the price for sin is



the Only Way to God, the Only Truth about God and the very Life of God. “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (I John 5:1 1,12).

Would the Rich Man’s brothers really believe if One rose from the dead? Will mankind believe?

The evidence that Jesus Christ is Who He claimed to be is demonstrated by the fact that He rose again and was “declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” (Romans 1:4).

Sadly, though He rose from the dead, men still do not believe. Even Dives’ brothers would not change their ways and, in his heart, the Rich Man knew it.

“But whom do you say that I am?” (Matt. 16:15). The Rich Man knew who He was.

Do you?

## **Chapter 15: THE JUDGMENT TO COME**

***“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”***

***Luke 16:31 (KJV)***

The thought that his brothers could very possibly find themselves in this dreadful place filled the Rich Man with horror. He had never dreamed that there could be such a dreadful place. The horror of it. The pain. The agony. The endlessness of an existence away from the Presence of God and everything that God represents was more than he could bear.

The more he tried to escape from the tormenting flames, the sickening smells and sounds around him, and the tormenting mocking demons, the worse it got. There are no bandages in hell, no soothing ointment to heal agonizing wounds of the mind and spirit and no release or peace of any kind.

He wondered if there would ever be an end to this mindless existence. Yet somehow, deep in his spirit, he knew that worse was still to come.

And he was right. The Rich Man has been in hell's holding cell now for at least two thousand years awaiting the Great Judgment Day.

God is a God of justice and cannot ignore sin. “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” (Acts 17:30,31).

A day is coming when the nations and every individual will give an account before Almighty God.

**“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart**

**from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matthew 25:31-34,42,46).**

Every individual will answer for their personal lifestyle as the great record books are opened. The Rich Man shuddered at the memory of his life as its moments passed before his eyes. He has been in Hades far longer than the years he spent on earth and every self-centred moment plays continuously in his mind like a video in a VCR without a stop button. The day of reckoning, he knew, would be sure and swift.

**“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened.**

**And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Revelation 20:1 1-15.**

People may mock God and say that Christianity is a vanishing religion and that Jesus Christ is a “holy fool”, as they did at the recent World Conference on Religion in Cape Town, South Africa. This comes as no surprise. The Bible prophesies that “those who scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts” (2 Pet 3:3), living immoral and unholy lives and saying whatever foolishness comes into their minds.

But, Jesus warned, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” (John 5:28-29).

Those who wilfully rejected the Truth will find themselves in the company of the Rich Man. “For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation

which will devour the adversaries.” (Hebrews 10:26-27).

Serious words! Without Christ, how will men escape from the consequences of their sin? “ .. How can you escape the condemnation of hell (Gehenna”, the final hell)?” Jesus cried out to His generation. (Matthew 23:33).

Judgment Day is certain. Things done in secret will be revealed openly. Words spoken in secret will be shouted from the rooftops. Nothing will be hidden as the record books are opened.

Those who have hurt and abused little children will wish they had never been born. Hear what the Lord has to say:

**“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 “Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! 8 “If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you.**

**It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. 9 “And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.” (Matthew 18:6-9).**

The Bible tells us that the Ten Commandments were given to us as a “tutor” to teach us that we are sinners. God knew we could never keep them. He also knew that we would never acknowledge that we are sinners unless we have a standard to measure our lives against. “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” (Galatians 3:24).

We are saved from the penalty of sin – eternal separation from a Holy God – only because Christ paid for our sin with His own blood. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Multiplied millions have given their lives to the Lord and been cleansed and forgiven, experiencing the reality of peace with God and an assurance of eternal life.

John writes about them. “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes,

peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:9-10).

Right from Adam's day, God revealed the truth about salvation to His creation. Looking forward to the Cross of Jesus Christ, He taught men to offer blood sacrifices for sin, carefully explaining that blood represents life. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul." (Leviticus 17:11).

The blood of the animals spoke of the Blood of the Lamb, God's Messiah, who would give His life as a sacrifice for our sin and triumphantly rise from the grave.

"For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:13-14).

Tragically, millions and millions of people have missed Heaven. Shunning and rejecting God's wondrous free Gift of Salvation, they believed the philosophies of men and doctrines of demons. "Professing to be wise, they became fools," (Romans 1:22). That was the Rich Man's testimony.

People are often convinced that they can believe whatever they like, think and do whatever enters their mind, and still enjoy the favour of God. The Bible strongly warns us not to deceive ourselves.

**"Do you not know that the unrighteous will NOT inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you.**

**But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."** (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

God will preserve this world until its history has run its course. "But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:7).

On that day those who scoff now will cry out “to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Revelation 6:16-17).

Many people feel that God owes them something and, if there is indeed a hell, that will definitely not be their destination. That’s what the Rich Man thought. But how wrong he was.

Sinners with unforgiven sin cannot enter into the holiness of heaven. The Bible tells us plainly “without shedding of blood there is no remission (of sin)” (Hebrews 9:22). Only those who have had the joy of sins forgiven are able to enter there.

And what a wonderful merciful God we serve. He is more than willing to pardon those who will run to Him for mercy.

The writer of the Old Testament book of Lamentations wrote about that. He was sinking in the depths of depression, without hope in this life or the next. He thought God could never forgive him and his people for their sin. And then he remembered the wonderful mercy of the Lord. In this life there is always opportunity to repent and call on Him for mercy.

**"And I said, “My strength and my hope have perished from the LORD.” Remember my affliction and roaming, The wormwood and the gall. My soul still remembers and sinks within me. This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.” – Lamentations 3:18-23**

Those who refuse to run from the darkness of sin will find no mercy. That is the stern warning of scripture. There is no other way to deal permanently with sin.

“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19).

What a privilege and source of joy it is for the genuine Christian believer to know that because of Christ there is no more condemnation in this life or the next. “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1).

As this world rushes towards the prophesied “end times”, prophecies

are rapidly being fulfilled. Matthew chapter 25, for example, warns of events that will happen in rapid succession – wars, famines, diseases and other horrific events that will cause people to die by the thousands.

Revelation chapter 13 prophesies that an end- time world government, world economy and world religious ruler will take their place in the “last days”. People of this earth will be forced to take a “mark” of allegiance to antichrist in their foreheads or right hands. Without it, they will be unable to survive on the earth.

**“He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” (Revelation 13:16,17).**

Possibly some type of microchip, this “mark” will seal the fate of thousands living on the earth at that time. While it may seem like a good idea at the time, it will result in millions hurtling headlong into hell.

**“Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” (Revelation 14:9-11).**

It’s amazing to think that the Apostle John wrote about modern-day events in specific detail some two thousand years ago. For years people puzzled over this mark ... until our generation. We understand microchip technology.

Many people have a microchip placed in their dogs and cats. If they are lost and taken to a local Vet or the Animal Care Shelter a scanner will reveal details of ownership. It is used with racehorses and even motors cars. Now the scientists are perfecting the microchip for humans and we hear them speaking about “womb to tomb” healthcare.

It all sounds marvellous, but it is the devil's great masterpiece to speedily hasten this world's slide into hell.

is there a devil? The Rich Man had not given too much thought to it in his lifetime. Now his testimony would scare the living daylights out of anyone who could listen. If only he had the opportunity to tell his brothers. He knows there is a devil and there are demons.

He knows there is a God and a Judgment Day ahead.

He knows.



## **Chapter 16: HELL, FINAL DESTINY OF SATAN**

*"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."*

*Luke 16:22-23 (KJV)*

Jesus said that Hell was a very real place, far worse than human words can describe it. Even the word picture of hell as a place of fiery torment barely begins to describe the real thing.

While some may believe that a God of Love would never send anyone to such a place or torment, it must never be overlooked that Hell was not prepared for mankind, but for the devil and his angels. "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:'" (Matthew 25:41).

It is a place of eternal torment – for the devil, as well as those who share his destiny. He is not the king of Hell, as some would have us believe, and his future destiny is as horrific as the sinner.

The same Bible that teaches us about Heaven also clearly states that there is such a place as Hell. This kind of teaching makes one shudder and cringe but, nevertheless, it remains the truth. The Rich Man's testimony confirms that.

It is interesting to take note that, while the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostle John speak more of the love of God than anyone else in God's Word, they also speak most of the punishment of the wicked. In fact, Bible scholars tell us that the Lord spoke more about Hell than about Heaven in His recorded earthly ministry. He was so conscious of its reality that He did everything He could to warn mankind of the consequences of going there.

Humans, created in the image and likeness of God, do not belong in hell but, tragically, they choose to go there voluntarily. They condemn themselves to Hell by rejecting the Lord as their personal Saviour and the writer to the Hebrews cries out: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:3).

Like the Rich Man, those who reject the Saviour will find themselves sharing the place prepared for the devil and his demons.

The Rich Man was utterly shocked to discover this truth. He never gave demons much thought while on earth, if he even believed in their existence at all. He knew his brothers shared the same philosophy of life and he was desperate to let them know just how wrong they were.

Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels (messengers or demons) exists and so do the beings for which it was created.

Who is this devil and where did he come from?

## **THE ORIGIN OF SATAN AND HIS DEMONS**

God, through His Son Jesus Christ, created everything that exists by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“For by Him (Jesus Christ) all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.” (Colossians 1:16).

“All things were made through Him (Jesus), and without Him nothing was made that was made.” (John 1:3).

It follows, therefore, that even the devil and his demonic spirits were created by God for His purposes.

God Himself is unique in that He has no beginning and no end. The concept of time began by His will. God alone was there “in the beginning” before He began creating and those who resist the testimony of scripture that Jesus is Divine need to think again. He, too, was there “in the beginning”. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1).

The Father created the world “through Him” for “for Him”, including the spiritual being we know as “the devil” or “satan”.

While we know precious little about creation before the existence of man, the Bible does give us some hints about satan’s creation, purpose, and fall.

The first time we meet him in the Bible, we find him in the Garden of Eden plotting the downfall of the human race. Genesis chapter three gives us the details. We are told that he deliberately approached Eve, the first woman, and started to criticise God.

Adam and Eve had been given specific instructions concerning the Garden of Eden. There were some things that were off limits to them and satan suggests to her that God was being mean-spirited in make these rules. “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has

God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”

His strategy has not changed throughout the ages. He focused her mind on the direct Word of God in order to make her doubt that God meant what He said. He is still doing that today. People commit adultery, live immoral lifestyles, steal, lie, murder and cheat and believe that God’s Word does not mean what it says.

The Rich Man tried that and found out to his eternal cost that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 3:23). Without the Saviour, there is no hope in this world or the next.

When the woman responded and quoted the Word of God, satan just laughed, before flatly contradicting God’s Word. “And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’” Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.” for God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”” (Genesis 3:5).

The “father of lies” (John 8:44) persuaded her that ignoring or rejecting God’s Word was inconsequential and that God had only made these rules to protect His own territory. If they refused to be boxed in and limited by His principles, the world was their oyster. They could be and do anything they wanted without consequences.

Eve believed him, persuaded Adam, and the rest is history. Sin came into the world and has affected every human being since.

Obviously satan was already evil by the time man was created. How did this happen? Was he created evil?

Ezekiel, the famous Old Testament prophet, was prophesying about Babylon one day when he was given a divine revelation concerning satan, the adversary of mankind. His prophecy takes us into the realm of the spirit world.

**“You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created.**

**14 “You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the**

day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you.” Ezekiel 28:13-17.

We are told here that satan was a created being and once enjoyed great glory and beauty, before he sinned and fell from grace.

Isaiah, another famous Old Testament prophet, was given a similar revelation and he tells us something about the circumstances of that fall. Satan had become proud and arrogant and he made a very foolish attempt to hijack the Throne of the Eternal God.

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut own to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’” (Isaiah 14:13-14).

His attempted coup was a disaster and Jesus commented on his expulsion from the Presence of God. Jesus existed long before He took on the form of man and was born as a baby in the manger that first Christmas morning. He personally witnessed these events. “And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” (Luke 10:18).

The New Testament gives us some further details. It would seem that a number of the created angels (spirit beings or messengers) joined his rebellion and they fell with him. Many Bible scholars believe the “stars” in Revelation 12:4 refer to them. “His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth ..” (Revelation 12:4).

These fallen angels – called “demons” in the Bible (from the Greek “DAIMON” meaning “inferior gods” – have been very occupied since that day in doing their best to prevent men, women and children from fulfilling their God-given destiny.

The Bible warns us to “be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (Peter 5:8.).

We are in a constant spiritual war as the devil makes every diabolical attempt to cause men, women and children to share his prophesied future. “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12).

The devil and his demonic spirits seek to control people’s minds, perverting their thinking and causing them to live a lifestyle that flies in the Face of a Holy Creator, living “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,” (Ephesians 2:2).

While people think they are “doing their own thing”, few realise that they are being held captive by an enemy power “ ... “whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

It is only when they try to break loose from their various bondages that they begin to get some idea of the seriousness of addiction.

Satan and his subordinate host of evil spirits exert their diabolical influence widely on the earth today, seeking to corrupt and deceive wherever they go. Their prime object is the destruction of the human race in body, soul and spirit.

The Bible has much to say about them and their operation. Jesus, when He came across diabolical spirits, cast them out and had no dealings with them.

Not all the demon spirits are free to wander on the earth, or harass people in “hell’s holding cell”. Some became so evil that God found it necessary to confine them to a special prison, where they await the Judgment Day as well.

Greek is a very specific language with shades of meaning for different concepts. The word “Tartarus” is used for the prison of the wicked angels.

“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell (Tartarus) and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;” (2 Peter 2:4)

While we often use the general word “hell” to describe the place of

departed spirits, the Greek original uses two specific words to denote the temporary and final place of the unrighteous dead.

The first we have already become familiar with. “Hades”, which we have referred to as “Hell’s Holding Cell” is the place of departed human spirits. The New Testament generally uses this term for the abode of the unrighteous or the lost. “Abraham’s Bosom” or “Paradise” is the usual term reserved for the abode of the righteous.

The other term used in the Greek is “Gehenna”. This is the “final hell”, also known as the Lake of Fire. Jesus refers to it in Mark 9:43-48. “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell (Gehenna), into the fire that shall never be quenched;” (Mark 9:43). This word “Gehenna” spoke volumes in Bible Days and the Lord used it as a word- picture or symbol to describe the horrors of Hell.

The Bible tells us that antichrist (the world political ruler of the end times) and his false prophet (the world religious ruler of the end times) will be the first to be cast into Hell when it is opened after the Great White Throne Judgment. “Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.” (Revelation 19:20).

Satan and his demonic angels will follow. “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” (Revelation 20:10).

Then, tragically, all those whose names are not written in the “Lamb’s Book of Life” will be next. “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books ...Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Revelation 20:12-15.

The second death results in eternal separation from God and all that is good. Heaven is forever closed to the unsaved. How serious a matter it is to make sure that we are ready for Heaven while we still have breath to call on the Name of the Lord.

For the first time in his existence, the Rich Man realised the truth of

that. For Him it was too late, but how he longed that someone would tell his brothers.

How he wished that he could change places with Lazarus, even for a second.

Some people talk about “hell on earth”, but the sober truth is that hell’s holding cell (Hades) is far, far worse than anything that could possibly be experienced in this life. Nothing can compare to its terrors and torment. Even the concept of “fire” pales in comparison with the eternal fire the Rich Man is experiencing even now.

And if Hades is so bad, how much worse must Gehenna be? The eternal hell that is shared by the devil and his angels and “lost” mankind for eternity? It will be so terrible that even the devil will be tormented.

Why would anyone want to go to such a place? Especially when the Lord has taken such trouble to make a “way out”.

No wonder Paul preached with passion: “We are Christ’s ambassadors, and God is using us to speak to you. We urge you, as though Christ Himself were here pleading with you, “be reconciled to God!” For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.” (2 Corinthians 5:20 NLT).

Heaven is a wonderful place, filled with His Glory and Grace! Why would anyone want to miss it?

## **Chapter 17: THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST**

*“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments ...” — Luke 16:22-23 (KJV)*

Jesus often spoke about Hell in direct preaching and in parable form. He made no apologies for talking about so awful a place, nor did He try to water its terrors down in any way.

Hell is traumatic and the worst thing that could ever happen to anyone. The very reason Jesus came to earth was to save men from this fate. The penalty for sin had to be paid if man was to be declared acquitted. Jesus did that for the “whosoever will believe”.

Those who feel that Jesus Christ spoke only about love have missed the essence of His message. He came to share the Love of God indeed, but it is a love made possible by the Cross. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)

Judgment follows sin. That is a divine principle and non-negotiable.

Many of the parables Jesus shared during His earthly ministry emphasize the great division between “the saved” and “the lost” and the difference in their eternal destiny.

When He taught, He made it very clear when He was speaking in parables. No names or specific details were given and the main point of the parable was always the important thing to take note of.

That is what makes the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man so important. Jesus names individuals and speaks in such a way that those listening knew this was no story to illustrate a point. This incident really took place.

Those who refuse to believe it is factual should, in any event, take note that the truth behind the story points to a very serious matter. Hell is as real as Heaven.

### **THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST (Matt. 22:1-14)**

The Bible specifically says this is a parable — a story that teaches truth.

It is the story of a certain king who arranged a wedding for his son.

In those days, the custom was to give advance notice of an intended banquet, but not the specific date and time. When these details were



made known later, it was anticipated that the guests would consider it important enough to give the function priority. To accept the first invitation and then refuse the second was considered to be a profound insult to the host.

The time had come for the wedding and the king sent his servants to inform his guests of the scheduled banquet. The servants were shocked when they discovered that no-one was willing to come.

The king could not believe it either. “Again, he sent out other servants, saying, Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.” But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business.” (Matthew 22:4-5)

Most were simply not interested. They were too busy with life to think about things that did not impact their bank balances.

Others seized his servants, beat them up and murdered them. Not only were they not interested, but also they became very aggressive when they heard about the invitation.

Of course the king was furious. He sent out his army to deal with the offenders and burn down their city.

Those who were originally invited, he said, were not worthy and he sent his servants far and wide to invite whoever they came across.

Lots of people came and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

Matthew records that the Pharisees – religious leaders of the Jewish nation – were so angry when they heard the story that they began immediately to plot His demise. They wanted Him dead!

They understood perfectly what He was implying. The wedding feast referred to Heaven. The gospel was proclaimed to the Jews first, who refused it, persecuted the prophets and rejected the One who claimed to be their Messiah.

As Jesus looked across the sea of faces, He could see the angry expressions clouding their faces. That did not deter Him for a moment and He continued the story.

One man did accept the invitation, but on his own terms. It was customary to wear a special wedding garment at these functions, but this man decided to go in his own clothes. He walked right into the hall and mingled with the guests.

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was

speechless.” (Matthew 22:12)

The man stuck out like a sore thumb. He knew what he was supposed to be wearing and that his own clothes were not acceptable. Yet he still tried to attend the function. He thought he could do it “his way”.

When the king confronted him, the man had nothing to say in his defence. He knew better, but he had chosen to attend in his everyday clothing.

The Pharisees were beside themselves at this point. How dare Jesus imply that their “religion” and “righteous deeds” were not sufficient to open the door of Heaven to them?

Eight hundred years earlier one of their prophets had written about the necessity of exchanging our human “works” for His “robe of righteousness”. Isaiah’s prophecy was often read in the local synagogues, but it was just words to them.

Isaiah had written: “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.” (Isaiah 61:10)

They did not want an invitation to Heaven on God’s terms, nor did they consider the alternative. If there was a Hell, it was a fitting place for the heathen. They would go to the wedding feast in their own clothes of “good works”.

The Pharisees were striving so hard to be “good enough” for God by their pious works and they were deeply offended that Jesus could suggest that they were being presumptuous in their anticipation of a welcome in Heaven by virtue of their “religion”.

How often we meet folk who reject the Gospel. “I have my religion”, they say in full confidence that God will make an exception for them. Others may avail themselves of God’s free offer of salvation, but they will do it their way.

This parable is a strong warning against presumption. The kingdom is for those who come when called and who come properly dressed. Those who accepted the invitation were responsible for changing their clothes.

The New Testament makes this very clear. Without holiness “no one will see the Lord:” (Hebrews 12:14)

There are people who desire to go to Heaven – who accept the invitation and come when called – but do not take time to change their

spiritual clothes, exchanging the garments of sin for the garments of righteousness. In other words, they want to escape hell, but do not want to prepare for heaven. Jesus said — they end up in Hell!

“Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” (Matthew 22:13)

This is a description of Hell itself. The place of “outer darkness”, filled with weeping and gnashing (grinding) of teeth in despair and pain.

This is a strong message for “religious” people of all generations. It is not enough to just “add Jesus to your life”. Our churches are full of people, who profess Christ, yet prove by their lifestyles that they are not wearing “the garments of righteousness.”

“Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.” (Philippians 3:17-19 NIV)

No wonder the Bible urges us strongly to “examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you — unless, of course, you fail the test?” (2 Corinthians 13:5 NIV).

Jesus met with a religious ruler one night. His name was Nicodemus. He was a good man, eager to serve the Lord, and they talked together about eternal matters.

The only way to escape Hell and enter the blessedness of Heaven, Jesus told him, was to be “born again” — to be reborn spiritually and exchange earthly righteousness for Christ’s righteousness.

Without that Nicodemus — and millions like him — would never see the Kingdom of God, never mind enter it.

“Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5)

There are only two requirements to enter Heaven. We must be born into the human family — and we must be “born again” into God’s spiritual family.

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” (Revelation

19:7)

The Rich Man would never again have the opportunity to prepare for Heaven. How he longed that his brothers would think again before it was too late.

## **Chapter 18: HEAVEN, A BREATH OF FRESH AIR**

*“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom:...;” Luke 16:22 (KJV)*

Lazarus was ecstatic – and he still is! Heaven was even more wonderful and exciting than he had dared to believe. His wildest dreams and imaginations did not even come close to the magnificence of this incredibly beautiful and glorious place. As the scriptures say: “But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”” (I Corinthians 2:9).

Like the Rich Man, he discovered the truth of God’s Word that we are made in the image and likeness of our God, eternal beings that will live forever in either one of two possible destinations. How he enjoyed the peace, the music, the colours, and the very atmosphere of heaven.

The Rich Man had tried to make contact with Lazarus, unsuccessfully. Abraham, represented here as the Father of Faith, did not involve him in this discussion. For Lazarus, the earth and its history were past. He had only to look forward to never-ending joy in the Presence of the Lord. “ ...In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Psalm 16:11) Nothing, however, could have prepared him for this.

Often in life we have a very high expectation of people or places, but at times their reality is disappointing. Heaven is not like that. As Hell is far worse than human words can describe, so Heaven is more wonderful, more glorious and more magnificent than we could imagine.

What a privilege to be allowed into Heaven. Lazarus knew that “no good thing” resides in man. We are born as sinners. He also knew that the “blood of the Lamb” alone makes atonement (pays the price) for sin and how he rejoiced that he had yielded his heart and life to the Lord while he had the opportunity. If he lived again, he would do it sooner. The personal presence of the Lord in his life while on earth was but a foretaste of His Glory and he could only join the angels in worship, adoration and thanksgiving at so great a salvation.

Why, he wondered, would people want to play with their eternal destinies and miss such a wonderful opportunity to enjoy peace with God in time and for all eternity? He could not understand anyone rejecting the Saviour, Who had paid the price of sin at such great

personal cost. Surely His supernatural resurrection should make men think again?

Just like the Rich Man, Lazarus discovered the earthly death is the gateway into eternity and he found himself in Paradise immediately. “Absent from the body and present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). No state of limbo, no purgatory, no sleeping in the grave. He was alive and alert, his faculties no longer limited by a physical body subject to time and earthly limitations.

The discovery that Heaven was a literal place, and not just a state of mind or being, thrilled him. Suddenly he understood Abraham’s motivation as he “waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10).

The Apostle Paul wrote about Heaven too. “For to me”, he said, “to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” If he were asked to decide whether to continue living, or go to heaven immediately, he testified that he would have a hard time making that decision because the church needed his ministry so badly.” ... I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better” (Phil. 1:21-23).

Many believe he was referring to his personal experience when he wrote about a vision of heaven in 2 Cor. 12:2-4. “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago; whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows; such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man; whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows; how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

What is this “third heaven that Paul refers to? The first heaven is the atmospheric heaven, the place of the stars and planets. The second heaven refers to outer space. The third heaven is the “heaven of heavens”, the very Throne Room of God Almighty.

“But who is able to build Him a temple, since heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him? Who am I then, that I should build Him a temple, except to burn sacrifice before Him?” (2 Chronicles 2:6).

Many have asked the question: Where is Heaven? Sceptics have laughingly pointed upwards, while they imagine their colleagues on the other side of the earth also pointing upwards. So silly when the Bible clearly tells us that Heaven is in the north. No matter where you live, north is north. “Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, Is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great

King."

Satan's rebellion occurred in the vicinity of the Throne of God in the north. "For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north;" (Isaiah 14:13).

Lazarus was so happy to know that Heaven would be his dwelling place or home forever. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps. 23:6).

He had no further contact with the Rich Man. The "great gulf" separated them for all eternity and there is no communication with the dead.

King David knew the truth of that. When his little son died, born of his union with Bathsheba, he told his anxious staff: "But now he is dead ... Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Sam. 12:23).

Safe forever, never again to leave the Presence of God! What more could anyone desire? "Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You." ( Psalm 73:25).

To be in Heaven means to be directly in the Presence of the Lord Himself for all eternity and Psalm 17:15 became Lazarus' experience. "As for me, I will see Your Face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness".

Yes, he was fully satisfied and fulfilled. Heaven is a wonderful place.

Some have wondered whether we will recognise each other in Heaven. Lazarus knows the answer to that. He knew exactly who Abraham was, and Abraham knew him by name. He did not lose his identity or his name. He was totally aware of his circumstances and the people around him.

Those who have "gone on" are very much alive. God is the God of the living, not the dead. "But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living ..." ( Mark 12:26-27.)

Lazarus has been enjoying the glorious atmosphere of Heaven for some time now, together with other "born again" children of God. He too is waiting for that Great Day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth again with "ten thousands of his saints" (Jude verse 14) to bring

this world's history to a close.

Is Heaven a place where spirits float around playing harps? Far from it!

Jesus said that those who were faithful during their earthly life would be given much more responsibility. We're going to be very busy there, but it will be joyful service without the anguish and weariness of life on earth. "His Lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.'" (Matthew 25:21).

Yes, Heaven is a beautiful and wondrous place. Human words cannot begin to describe it, but the Apostle John tries with the best symbols earth has to offer. "The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald." (Revelation 21:18-19).

No more sadness or sorrow. "They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Revelation 7:16-17).

"But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (I Corinthians 2:9).

Lazarus is so glad he found the Lord while he had the opportunity. The Rich Man missed it and he was very afraid his brothers would miss it too.

Have you received Christ as your Personal Saviour? Do you know that you are going to Heaven?

There is a Hell to shun and a Heaven to gain. It's your call.



## **Chapter 19: IT'S YOUR CALL!**

*“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”*

*Luke 16:31 (KJV)*

The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, told by Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry, is a shocker.

We have learned that there really is a Hell to shun, a place more terrible than anything the human mind could ever conceive. This place, prepared for the devil and his angels, is being invaded by human beings who refuse to have their sins forgiven and choose to enter eternity in a state of sin and separation from God. So tragic when God Himself paid the supreme price in Christ Jesus to make a way for people to avoid hell.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

We have learned that Jesus Christ is the Only Way to heaven. “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)

Those who turn from their sin and call on the Lord for mercy, forgiveness and cleansing find Him to be a wonderfully merciful God, full of compassion and love for the worst of sinners. ““Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.” (Isaiah 1:18)

The Gospel is for the “whosoever will come” and the Lord pleads with every individual: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” (Revelation 3:20)

The devil's primary business is to deny, or at best minimise, the great danger awaiting people who die in their sin. If he can get men to believe that there is no hell, or that hell is merely the grave, or that hell is only a figurative expression and not a literal place then he will have achieved his purpose. If he can get people to believe that they will be burned up and annihilated without much, if any, pain – or that they will have another chance to get saved – or that, after all, God is too good to send his creation to hell, then he will accomplish his

purpose, which is to get men to continue in sin and so assuredly go to Hell.

There are some readers of this book who may be in hell within a very short time. Some who are now in health, happy and secure, may find themselves there before they know it. There is no time to waste. Accept Christ today as Saviour and Lord.

The Rich Man has been in hell's holding cell for a long time now. His case is past hope and, together with countless others, he is crying in extreme misery and utter despair.

We still have the opportunity to get right with God. We are blessed with Bibles, Christian music, preaching, teaching and the truth openly proclaimed in all parts of the world. What wouldn't the Rich Man give for just one day's opportunity to give his life to God?

Every one that has not received Christ is literally hanging over the pit of hell. Here today and gone tomorrow ... to a Christless eternity. This is the day of salvation. Neglect it and you will curse the day you were born. It is as serious as that.

As Jonathan Edwards puts it so clearly in his booklet "Sinners in the hands of an angry God": "Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen... Natural men's prudence and care to preserve their own lives, or the care of others to preserve them, do not secure them for a moment ...Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and flee from the wrath to come".

The Lord's grace and mercy is available to anyone who will call on His Name. The ground is level at the foot of the Cross.

## **Chapter 20: THE GROUND IS LEVEL AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS**

John 3:16 has been called “the Gospel in a nutshell”. It gives hope to the sinner, no matter how bad his life has been – or how good his life has been. All who believe and put their trust in the Lord will never find themselves in Hell.

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”  
(John 3:16)*

“Whoever” means whoever! Whether you have been healed or not, whether you are religious, or an atheist... whoever and whatever you are ... it makes no difference to God. He has no favourites and He has no spiritual grandchildren. Each person must make his or her decision for Christ. The ground is level at the foot of the Cross!

“Believe” is a special word. Even the devil believes in God, but it does not help him. This word implies trust, reliance on, commitment to... it involves a personal relationship. Do you know Jesus as your Personal Saviour? You can!

Belief is “in Him”. He is the important One. It is not belief about – but personal trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not mere mental assent to a system of religion or religious philosophy. It’s you and Him.

Everlasting life is not just living forever. Everybody will live forever ... in one of two possible destinations – Heaven or Hell. This scripture is talking about GOD’S LIFE in us. To know Jesus Christ is to have Eternal Life.

“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” I John 5:1 1-12)

Do you know Him? Do you desire to know Him? Then right now -

\* ACKNOWLEDGE before the Lord that you are a sinner, lost and without hope for eternity.

\* BELIEVE that Jesus paid the penalty for your sin; and

\* CONFESS your need of a Saviour to Him.

He stands ready to hear your call. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to

him and dine with him, and he with Me.” (Revelation 3:20).

Don’t leave Him outside your life, but receive Him today. “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:” (John 1:12).

His promise is sure. Those who receive Him as Saviour will never experience the awful terror of Hell. Their debt of sin has been paid in full and the glories of Heaven await them.

No one is too good — or too bad — to receive the free Gift of Salvation, paid for by Christ with His own life. It is His grace (undeserved favour) that has kept us from complete destruction and His mercy is extended to “the whosoever will come”.

You have only to call on His Name.

## **THE SINNER'S PRAYER**

The following is known as the "Sinner's Prayer". Multiplied thousands have cheated Hell and found their way back to God from the dark paths of sin, doubt and confusion as they have prayed it from their heart.

We invite you to pray it too.

Heavenly Father,

I come to You in the Name of the Jesus Christ,

I acknowledge that Jesus is Lord and that He died for my sin. He rose again the third day and is alive forevermore, ready to save me from hell.

I acknowledge that I am a sinner, lost and undone, with no good works of my own to save me from hell.

I repent of all my sin. I ask you to forgive me for not serving You with all of my heart.

From this day forward I will start all over again, And so, as I repent of every sin that I have ever committed, I ask You to come into my life and to be the Lord of my life. I will serve no other God but You.

Thank You, Lord, that You are a Covenant-keeping God. And, even as I endeavour, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, to keep my side of the covenant, I know that You will keep Your side, and keep me from the dreadful place called Hell, assuring me of a future in Your Presence.

I ask all these things in the Powerful and Precious Name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

Write and tell us about it!

## **About the Author**

Val Waldeck is a well-known South African author and journalist. She has written a number of books and writes a regular column in a South African National Christian magazine called “JOY”.

Val is also a recognised Bible Teacher and has been in fulltime Christian ministry since December 1973. She is a graduate of the Bible Institute of South Africa and holds a Dip. Th. with the University of London.

Val has spoken extensively in South Africa, the U.S.A. and the United Kingdom.

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